NATION

Congress exits exit poll debates

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Markets up again after 5-day losing streak

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SPORTS

State set for the biggest football event

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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Rape-accused Prajwal in police custody till 6 June

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Prajwal Revanna, the suspended JD(S) MP facing sexual abuse allegations, was arrested on Friday upon his return from Germany. This was a month after he left the country in the wake of explicit videos of his alleged actions doing the rounds in Hassan.

A special court in the city remanded him to police custody till 6 June.

In a clear messaging early in the day, a team of women police personnel 'welcomed' Prajwal Revanna upon his arrival here, as they were deputed to execute a warrant and take him to the CID office for interrogation.

After evading summons and staying out of the country, the 33 year-old grandson of JD(S) Supremo and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda landed here past midnight from Germany's Munich, only to be arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) minutes later and whisked away for questioning. Soon after he alighted from the plane from Munich, he was received by women in Khaki, sources in the SIT said. During the procedure of executing the arrest warrant, he was flanked by the women cops who were led by two IPS officers, Suman D Pennekar and Seema Latkar. He was then taken in a jeep in which only women police were present. They took him to the CID office. "It was a conscious call to send women officers to arrest Prajwal, sending home a message that the JD(S) leader exploited his seat and power as an MP with women. The same women have authority to arrest him through all legal proceedings," a source in the SIT said. There was also a symbolic message to the alleged victims that women officers were not afraid of anyone, the source added. The MP was later taken for medical examination under tight security. Escorted by female police officials, he was taken to Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital here. The SIT is also contemplating a potency test on Prajwal. A potency test is done to ascertain if a rape accused is capable of committing sexual assault on victims.

—PTI

>>>More on Page 2

A team of women police personnel arrested Prajwal Revanna upon his arrival in Bengaluru on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

Court rejects Bhavani's anticipatory bail plea

Suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna's mother and MLA HD Revanna's wife Bhavani Revanna's anticipatory bail application was rejected by the Special Court For People's Representatives on Friday. Special Investigation Team (SIT) has informed Bhavani Revanna that they want to inquire her in a kidnapping case on 1 June.

Bhavani had sought anticipatory bail on Wednesday in the kidnapping of a woman in KR Nagar in Mysuru district. SIT probing into the rape, sexual harassment and kidnapping cases against Prajwal Revanna and HD Revanna raised objections to Bhavani's plea. SIT claimed that Bhavani's role needed to be investigated in the housemaid's kidnapping.

IT'S A WRAP ON POLLS AS NORTH INDIA BAKES

PM in fray as citizens vote across 57 seats in 7 states, UT

VARANASI/CHANDIGARH, 31 MAY

Fifty-seven seats across seven states and the Union territory of Chandigarh will go to polls in the seventh and final phase of Lok Sabha elections on Saturday that include Varanasi, from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term.

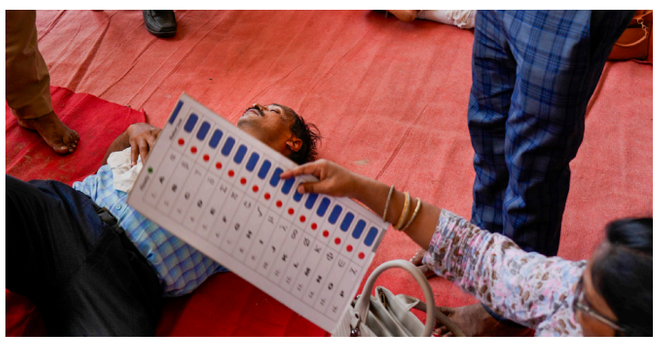
Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Polling for the remaining 42 assembly constituencies of Odisha and bypolls to six assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh will also take place simultaneously.

Other prominent candidates among the total 904 contestants in fray are Union minister Anurag Thakur, Mamata Banerjee's nephew Abhishek Banerjee, Lalu Prasad's daughter Misa Bharti and actor Kangana Ranaut. Over 10.06 crore citizens, including nearly 5.24 crore men, 4.82 crore women and 3,574 third gender electors are eligible to vote in this phase. Saturday's voting will mark the end to the marathon polling process that began on 19 April month and has already covered 486 Lok Sabha seats in 28 states and Union territories. EC said polling parties have been dispatched along with machines and poll materials to their respective polling stations.

At the 1.09 lakh polling stations, basic facilities including ample shade, drinking water, ramps, and toilets are being provided to ensure that polling takes place in a comfortable and secure environment, it said. The poll panel has also directed CEOs and state machineries to take adequate measures to manage the adverse impact of hot weather.

—PTI

>>>More on Pages 3 and 4



A polling official faints at a distribution center amid heatwave, on the eve of the seventh Lok Sabha elections, in Varanasi on Friday ***PHOTO: PTI***

25 poll personnel die as intense heat boils North

At least 40 including 25 polling officials have died due to heat on Friday in North India. 25 of the staff were deployed on poll duty in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, as heatwave conditions gripped a large swathe of the country. Among the fatalities recorded, the maximum 17 were from Uttar Pradesh, 14 from Bihar, five from Odisha and four from Jharkhand, where officials said 1,300 people are hospitalised with heatstroke conditions. Weather station in Nagpur recorded a temperature of 56 degrees Celsius.

ANOTHER PROVOCATION?

China deploys jets 150km from Sikkim

Six Chinese J-20 fighters at Shigatse airport ***PHOTO: ALL SOURCE ANALYSIS***

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Satellite images gathered on 27 May show that China has deployed its most advanced J-20 "Mighty Dragon" fifth-generation fighter jets less than 150km from Line of Actual Control near Sikkim.

The image reveals the presence of six Chinese Air Force J-20 stealth fighters on the flight-line at a dual-use military and civilian airport which serves Shigatse, the second-largest city in Tibet.

The airport lies at an altitude of 12,408 feet, making it among the highest airports in the world. A KJ-500 Airborne Early Warning and Control Aircraft is also visible.

The latest imagery only bolsters the suspicion, expressed by military veterans for months, that Beijing intends to change the status quo in the eastern sector of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim the way it has done in eastern Ladakh, where it is said to have occupied close to 1,000sqkm of India-claimed territory since May 2020.

The image has been reproduced with permission from All Source Analysis, a firm that looks at Geospatial Intelligence, often from satellite imagery

—Salar News

In a first, Trump convicted of felony in hush money case

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 31 MAY

Donald Trump has become the first former US president to be convicted of a felony. This was after a grand jury in New York found him guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 presidential election, mounting his legal challenges amidst his bid to return to the White House in November. In a historic verdict, a panel of 12 Manhattan jurors on Thursday said they unanimously agreed that Trump, 77, falsified business records to conceal a USD 1,30,000 hush money payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels to influence the 2016 contest. *—PTI*

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K'taka gets WhatsApp chatbot for snakebites

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

To bring more awareness about snakebite prevention as well as to prevent snake persecution, a first-of-its-kind WhatsApp chatbot has been launched in Karnataka's Mysuru. Incidentally, in February, Karnataka also became the first State in India to declare snakebite as a notifiable disease. The chatbot, launched by Humane Society International India in collaboration with The Liana Trust, an organisation that engages in conservation efforts by educating people, provides easily accessible information about snake species found in Mysuru. *—PTI*

200 flyers of AI Delhi-SFO flight face 30 hrs delay

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

More than 200 passengers of a San Francisco-bound Air India flight faced an ordeal due to a delay of nearly 30 hours caused by a technical glitch, the aircraft's non-functional air conditioning system and payload issues. The flight, which was originally scheduled to take off at around 3.30 pm on Thursday, was delayed for nearly 6 hours before being rescheduled for Friday. And on Friday, the flight, to be operated with a Boeing 777 aircraft, was first scheduled for around 11.00 am departure which was changed to 3pm and after finally pushing back at around 5.45 pm, the plane came back to the bay. Air India flight from Mumbai to San Francisco, on 24 May, was rescheduled and finally departed at around 5.30 pm on 25 May. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 5

Contractor ends life; note blames KRIDL

DAVANGERE, 31 MAY

Davangere-based contractor reportedly died by suicide over alleged non-clearance of bills worth Rs 80 lakhs by Karnataka Rural Infrastructure Development Corporation (KRIDL)for the works he executed, at Santebennur in Channagiri taluk on 26 May.

PS Gowdar, who had been residing in Santhebennur, was involved in various works under the premises of the Agriculture Department of Santhebennur. Despite completing the projects, he allegedly struggled to receive the payments due to him from KRIDL.

In the death note, he charged that his elder brother GS Nagaraj, younger brother Gowdar Sreenivas and KRIDL were responsible for his death.

He claimed the financial strain was compounded by accusations from his two brothers, who alleged that he had been cheating them in financial matters. Unable to cope with the pressure and frustration, Gowder decided to end his life. According to the note, the payment to him was pending due to bureaucratic delays. Gowder's note expressed his wish for KRIDL to compensate his family adequately.

Following the discovery of the death note, Gowder's wife, Vasant Kumari, filed a complaint at the Santhebennur police station. Based on the complaint, the police have registered a case under Section 306 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), which pertains to abetment of suicide. *—Salar News*

Three children drown in Hassan lake

HASSAN, 31 MAY

Three children allegedly drowned while playing near a lake in Narseepura village, Belur taluk in Hassan district on Friday. The victims are Dixit, 10, Nityashree, 12, and Kusuma, 6.

The children had tied up their cows near the lake under Halebidu police station limits and were playing when the tragedy struck. This comes two weeks after four children died from drowning when they went to swim in Hinnale Lake in Muthigepura at Alur taluk in the district on 16 May.

A case is registered at Halebidu police station.

—Salar News

INDIAN ECONOMY GROWS AT 8.2%, FASTEST GLOBALLY

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India's economy growth slowed to a four-quarter low of 7.8 per cent in the January-March period, but pushed the annual growth rate for FY24 to 8.2 per cent, mainly on account of good showing by manufacturing, official data showed on Friday.

The growth propelled the Indian economy to USD 3.5 trillion and set the stage for achieving the USD 5-trillion target in the next few years.

The economic expansion was recorded at 7.8 per cent during the January-March 2024, while it was 8.6 per cent in October-December 2023 and 8.1 per cent in July-September 2023.

According to National Statistical Office data, real GDP, or GDP at constant prices, is estimated to attain a level of Rs 173.82 lakh crore in 2023-24, against the first revised estimates (FRE) of GDP for 2022-23 of Rs 160.71 lakh crore. Nominal GDP or GDP at current prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 295.36 lakh crore in 2023-24, against Rs 269.50 lakh crore in 2022-23, showing a growth rate of 9.6 per cent. The real Gross Value Added is estimated at Rs 158.74 lakh crore in 2023-24, against the FRE for 2022-23 of Rs 148.05 lakh crore, registering a growth rate of 7.2 per cent as compared to 6.7 pe cent in 2022-23. *—PTI*

Adani enters Africa with 30-year Tanzania port deal

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Friday said its subsidiary company has signed a 30-year concession agreement with the Tanzania Ports Authority to operate and manage a terminal at the Dar es Salaam Port in the east African country. The Dar es Salaam Port is a gateway port with a well-connected network of roadways and railways, and concession agreement signed by Adani International Ports Holdings Pte Ltd (AIPH) marks the entry of Adani Ports into Tanzania. Adani Ports-led consortium will acquire the project company in Tanzania, which houses all port handling equipment and employees, for an amount of USD 39.5 million, APSEZ said in a statement. East Africa Gateway Ltd has been incorporated as a joint venture of AIPH, AD Ports Group, and East Harbour Terminals Ltd, the statement added. APSEZ will be the controlling shareholder and will consolidate EAGL on its books, it said. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 7

PHOTO: PTI

77% LESS THAN 2023

Water level in reservoirs drops to 23%

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The water level of the country's 150 main reservoirs has dropped to 23 per cent and is also 77 per cent less than last year's levels at this time, according to Central Water Commission (CWC) data.

Last week, the live storage of these reservoirs was at 24 per cent. The present storage is merely 77 per cent of last year's levels and 94 per cent of the normal storage, CWC data stated.

In its latest weekly bulletin, released on Friday, the commission said that "the total live storage available is 41.705 billion cubic metres (BCM), equating to 23 per cent of the total capacity".

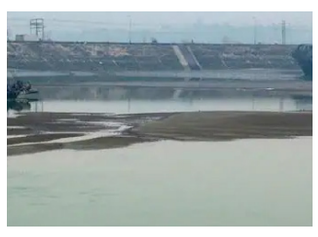


PHOTO: PTI

The 150 main reservoirs monitored by the CWC have a combined live storage capacity of 178.784 BCM, which is around 69.35 per cent of the total storage capacity created in the country. Ten of the 150 reservoirs are located in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan. *—PTI*

Delhi moves SC for water release from Haryana

Delhi has approached Supreme Court seeking directions to Haryana for release of water. The plea states that there is excessive surge of water demand as it reels under heawave for fifth day with the mercury soaring to 45.8 degrees. IMD also said Delhi recorded only two rainy days this May, the lowest in 10 years.

Prajwal's arrest will follow legal procedures: HM

I came back to Bengaluru because I have to stand by my words, says Prajwal after arrest on arrival

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara on Friday said suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, was arrested after completing due process, and further legal procedures will follow.

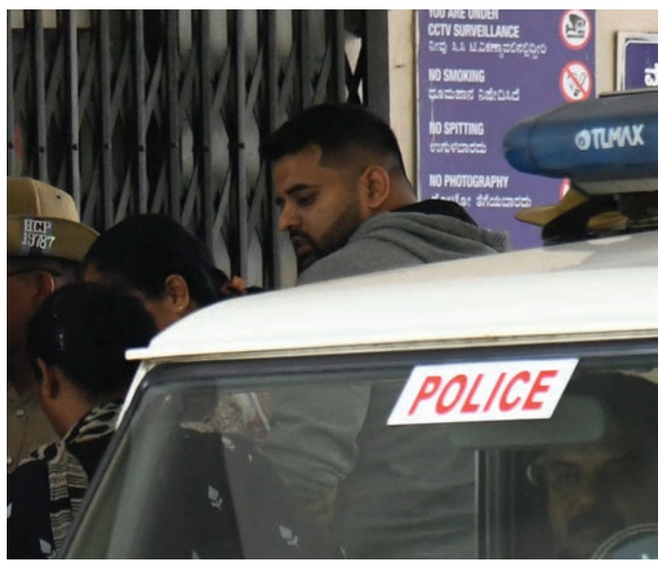
He said the arrest will help the Special Investigation Team formed by the State government to probe cases against the Hassan MP.

"Prajwal Revanna landed around 12.40 am -12:50 am from Germany's Munich. As there was an arrest warrant against him, SIT accordingly arrested him and took him into custody and further legal procedures they will follow today. I'm yet to discuss with our officials," Parameshwara said.

Speaking to reporters, he said, "As of now, the only information is that he (Prajwal) has come. He has been arrested and according to law, what action should be taken, like -- medical examination, presenting him before the judiciary. All those procedures will follow, including questioning him."

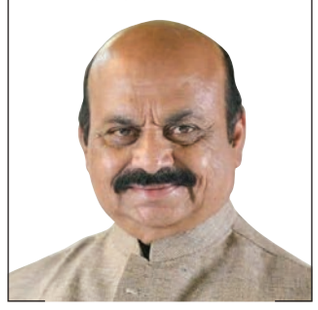
"Naturally he should have cooperated to the arrest. His immigration papers were cleared and he was brought out (of airport)," he added.

—PTI



Suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna is taken to hospital for medical examination under tight security, on Friday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

> **The law will take its course, the SIT probe should be fair and focus on providing justice to the victims. There are many dimensions to this case. We will wait and see what happens.**
>
> —Basavaraj Bommai, Former Chief Minister



Prajwal will cooperate with SIT, doesn't want media trial: Lawyer

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Suspended JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna, who is facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, was extending full cooperation to the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing cases against him, and has requested that let there be no media trial, his advocate said on Friday.

Stating that Prajwal has been arrested in a case registered against him in Holenarasipura in Hassan district, Advocate Arun G said, one has to wait to see what happens to the Hassan MP's bail application pending before the court.

"I went to speak to him. He has appealed to the media that he has come forward to cooperate with the investigation. So he has requested that there be no media trial. Let there be no negative campaign unnecessarily," Arun said.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Prajwal said, the Hassan MP is before the SIT to give the fullest cooperation.

"Prajwal said -- I have come forward, the whole purpose of me coming to Bengaluru or before SIT is that I have to stand by my words. I have come forward. I will give the fullest cooperation -- these are his words," he added.

In the first case registered against him at the Holenarasipura Town police station in Hassan on 28 April, Prajwal is accused of sexually harassing a 47-year-old former maid. He is listed as accused number two, while his father and Holenarasipura MLA, HD Revanna, is accused number one.

Prajwal has been so far booked in three cases of sexual assault. There are also charges of rape against him. *—PTI*

HC adjourns hearing on petition filed by HD Revanna

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Karnataka High Court on Friday adjourned the hearing on the petition filed by Prajwal Revanna's father and MLA HD Revanna for quashing of an FIR related to a kidnapping case until 3 June.

The case is registered in KR Nagara police station against HD Revanna and others for the alleged abduction of a victim of sexual assault by Prajwal Revanna.

HD Revanna was arrested earlier in connection with a kidnapping case on 29 April. He was granted conditional bail by a special court for people's representatives.

Meanwhile, JD (S) suspended MP Prajwal Revanna, who was arrested in the obscene video case and was brought to Bowring and Lady Curzon Hospital in Bengaluru for medical examination.

After the conclusion of the medical exam, Prajwal was taken to the City civil court where he was produced before the 42nd ACMM court judge.

The SIT is likely to request the court to hand over Prajwal to their custody. The Hasan MP was arrested by the SIT on Thursday night at Bengaluru Airport.

Earlier, the SIT arrested two prime accused in connection with the case. The arrested have been identified as Naveen Gowda and Chetan. They allegedly distributed pen drives containing videos of Prajwal Revanna sexually assaulting women. *—ANI*

MLA HD Revanna was arrested earlier in connection with a kidnapping case, and was granted conditional bail by special court ***PHOTO: PTI***

Man stabs 2 over seat reservation at Nelamangala Rly Stn

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Two people were fatally stabbed at Nelamangala Railway Station after an altercation broke out over seat reservation by an unidentified individual on Friday. The trouble began when one Gangadhar, asked his friend Yogesh to hold a seat for him as he was facing some network issues. As the train reached Nelamangala, an unidentified individual attempted to occupy the seat. When confronted, the individual attacked Gangadhar with a vegetable knife and then fled the train. The two were travelling from Yeshwanthpu. Both Gangadhar and Yogesh sustained injuries and received treatment at Nelamangala Public Hospital. The police are actively searching for the assailant who fled the scene. A case has been registered at the Nelamangala Town Police Station regarding the incident.

—Salar News

Mysuru gears up for poll result counting day

MYSURU, 31 MAY

The vote counting for the Mysore-Kodagu Lok Sabha constituency election is set to take place on 4 June at the Maharani College of Commerce and Management, Paduwarahalli. District Election Officer KV Rajendra announced that all necessary preparations for personnel placement, security, and training have been completed. , Rajendra assured that efforts would be made to announce the results as swiftly as possible. Postal ballots received by 8am on 4 June will be included in the count. S Iqbal Chaudhary has been appointed as counting observer. ***—Salar News***

3 IAS officers take over key positions to govt

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Umashankar SR, IAS has been placed as a concurrent charge for Additional Chief Secretary to government, Urban Development after Rakesh Singh retired from service on Friday. Additionally, IAS officer Gaurav Gupta, the current Additional Chief Secretary to the government in Power Department, has been assigned the role of Chief Secretary of Water Resources Department. Rashmi Mahesh V, IAS has been assigned the additional role of Chairperson of Karnataka Appellate Tribunal after Manjula V retired on Friday. Rashmi Mahesh V, currently serves as an officer in Revenue Department.***—Salar News***

YOUNG ACTIVISTS

Young volunteers dressed as chicks and calves create awareness requesting people to go vegan during a demonstration organised by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) on Friday ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Kerala Min rejects DKS' claim of animal sacrifice

T'PURAM, 31 MAY

Kerala Minister for Higher Education and Social Justice R Bindu on Friday rejected Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's claim that an animal sacrifice was carried out near a temple in north Kerala against him, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and the Congress government there.

Bindu said such things will not happen in Kerala.

The minister also said that in other parts of the country, attempts were being made to drag society into the dark ages.

At the same time, she also said, "We need to examine whether such attempts are being made in our state too."

Shivakumar on Thursday claimed that a ritual named "Shatru Bhairavi Yaga", which involves the sacrifice of animals, was performed at a temple in Kerala, targeting him, Siddaramaiah and the Congress government in Karnataka.

Without revealing any names, he alleged that some political people in Karnataka were getting it done, and Aghoris (monastic order of ascetic Shaivite sadhus) were being consulted for it.

"Shatru Bhairavi Yaga is being performed near Rajarajeshwari temple in Kerala for Shatru Samhara (destruction of enemies). For this yaga 'Pancha Bali' (five kinds of sacrifice) is being given...21 goats, three buffaloes, 21 black sheeps, five pigs....Aghoris are being approached. It is going on," he had claimed. *—PTI*

RS 88.62 CRORE SCAM

State forms SIT to probe illegal money transfer case

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The State government on Friday constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the illegal money transfer case involving the Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation Ltd.

The four-member SIT team is headed by Manish Kharbikar, Additional Director General of Police, Economic Offences, at the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in Bengaluru.

The unauthorised transfer of Rs 88.62 crore from the Corporation's bank account came to light after Accounts Superintendent at the Corporation Chandrashekhar P died by suicide on Sunday evening, leaving behind a note.

He has named the corporation's now suspended Managing Director JG Padmanabh, Accounts Officer Parashuram G Durugannavar, and Union Bank of India Chief Manager Suchismita Rawal in the note, while also stating that the minister had issued oral orders for transferring the funds.

The SIT will probe the case registered by Chandrashekhar's wife at a police station in Vinoba Nagar in Shivamogga, on the basis of her complaint and the note left behind by her deceased husband. The SIT has been asked to submit the probe report to the government at the earliest. *—PTI*

BJP to protest if Nagendra doesn't quit

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Leader of the Opposition R Ashoka has demanded the resignation of Minister for Youth Empowerment, Sports, and Scheduled Tribe Welfare, B Nagendra, in connection with suicide of a tribal corporation employee. Ashoka said that if Nagendra does not resign by 6 June, BJP will launch a State-wide agitation.

Speaking to reporters, Ashoka highlighted that the deceased officer's suicide note implicated Minister Nagendra, alleging that he had given oral instructions for money transfer. "The Congress government is looting the money of Dalits. This government only wants to turn Rs 187 crore which is reserved for the development of Scheduled Tribes towards the pockets of the congress leaders," said Ashoka.

Leader of Opposition R Ashoka said that if Nagendra does not resign by 6 June, BJP will launch a State-wide agitation ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Former Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai also weighed in, urging Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to clarify his position on the suicide of the officer from the Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation. Bommai recalled that during BJP regime, then-minister KS Eshwarappa resigned on moral grounds following a contractor's suicide. Shivakumar confirmed that government is thoroughly investigating the allegations. *—Salar News*

CM examining charges against Nagendra: DKS

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

Amid speculation that Karnataka Minister B Nagendra's resignation may be sought over allegations against him in an illegal money transfer case, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was examining the facts.

Home Minister G Parameshwara too, while admitting that the scam has taken place, said the Chief Minister will decide on whether the Scheduled Tribes Welfare minister must resign.

The unauthorised transfer of crores of rupees from Karnataka Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation's (KMVSTDC) bank account came to light after Accounts Superintendent Chandrashekhar died by suicide on Sunday evening, leaving behind a note detailing the misappropriation of funds..

"The Chief Minister and I are examining the facts. Let there be an examination. There is no question of protecting anyone. Let's see," Shivakumar said.

Parameshwara, while responding to a question based on a report sought about the scam, said the Chief Minister will take a decision on Nagendra's resignation. "Let' see, the Chief Minister will decide." *—Salar News*

THIS SUNDAY

Bengaluru's Palace Grounds to host Konkani Utsav 2024

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The Kings Court at Palace Grounds is set to come alive this Sunday as it hosts the Konkani Utsav 2024.

The event, which aims to draw Konkani speakers from across Karnataka, is an initiative by various professionals and business leaders of the community. It promises to be a vibrant platform for interaction, business promotion, and cultural celebration.

Sona Ganesh Nayak, founder of 'Amchi Konkani' and owner of Sona Caterers, confirmed that preparations, including food arrangements, are well underway. "We anticipate a large turnout from all districts in Karnataka for this third annual event. The earlier events served as precursors, but this edition is bigger in the range of programmes, attendance, and highlights," said Nayak.

PHOTO: X

Dr Dayananda Pai, Chancellor of Vidyashilp University and Chairman of Century Group, highlighted the event's cultural significance. "Utsav aims to promote the language, culture, and art of the Konkani community. We hope this event will inspire the younger generation to continue our rich cultural heritage and traditions," he said.

- Konkani Utsav 2024 is also seen as a potential meeting ground for young community members to find suitable life partners, further fostering community bonds and continuity

Despite being a small community, Konkani speakers have made significant societal contributions. They have established several banks and run numerous educational

Konkani Utsav 2024 is also seen as a potential meeting ground for young community members to find suitable life partners, further fostering community bonds and continuity. *—PTI*

FAKE CBI GANG BUSTED, 4 STUDENTS HELD

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The Soladevanahalli police have arrested four Kerala students who were allegedly posing as CBI officials to extort money from students in the City. The arrested individuals were identified as Deepak R Chandra, 37, Pramoda AS, 42, Anantha Krishna, 23 and Adarsh, 22. They had allegedly used fake identities to carry out their illicit activities.

According to the police, the gang created counterfeit ID cards featuring the CBI logo. The gang often targeted Kerala students residing in the City. They had indulged in raiding the student's houses. During these raids, impostors assaulted the students and planted drugs in their homes. They then forced victims to hold the drugs while recording incriminating videos. Using these videos as leverage, the gang used to blackmail and demand large sums of cash from the victims, *—Salar News*

HC stays action against prof in cybercrime case

BENGALURU, 31 MAY

The Karnataka High Court has ordered a stay on any coercive action against a Thane professor Vinit Narayan Naik, who faces charges of creating communal discord through his social media posts. The order will remain in effect until the next hearing on 12 June.

Naik had filed a petition to quash the cybercrime case registered against him. The bench, headed by Justice M Nagaprasanna issued the stay order. On behalf of the petitioner, senior advocate M Arun Shyam contended that Naik did not make any statements himself but merely tweeted in response to a statement made by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. Shyam noted that Naik's comments had already been extensively covered by TV channels and that there was no basis for the charges against him. He urged the court to quash the FIR.

The controversy began when Chief Minister Siddaramaiah made a statement on the distribution of the country's wealth to a particular community, which was broadcast on TV channels. Responding to this, Naik had tweeted from his 'Bhikumatre (Modi's family) Mumbaicha Don' account. In his post, Naik targeted Siddaramaiah's statement, suggesting that the Chief Minister's plan involved taking wealth from Hindus, including Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST), and distributing it to Muslims.

Following this, a criminal case was registered against Naik under various sections of the Information Technology Act and the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at the Cyber Crime Police Station. He was subsequently arrested but is out on bail. *—Salar News*

LARGEST ELECTION COMES TO AN END

Voters will decide the fate of 904 candidates across 57 seats in the last leg of polls

UTTAR PRADESH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 144

Phases: 7 | Phase 7 seats: 13

Constituencies: Varanasi, Mahrajganj, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Bansgaon, Ghosi, Ghazipur, Ballia, Salempur, Chandauli, Mirzapur, Robertsganj

KEY PLAYERS

NARENDRA MODI, BJP
Seat: Varanasi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a win from here for the 3rd time. In 2014, he defeated AAP's Arvind Kejriwal and won against SP's Shalini Yadav in 2019. BJP has won the seat 7 times and Congress 6 times.

KAJAL NISHAD, SP
Seat: Gorakhpur

Kajal, a Bhojpuri film actress and INDIA bloc's candidate, is locked in a straight fight with sitting BJP MP Ravi Kishan Shukla, who is also an actor-turned-politician. Kajal belongs to OBC community, which accounts for one-fourth of population here.

WEST BENGAL

NO OF CANDIDATES: 124

Phases: 7 | Phase 7 seats: 9

Constituencies: Dum Dum, Barasat, Basirhat, Jaynagar, Mathurapur, Diamond Harbour, Jadavpur, Kolkata Dakshin, Kolkata Uttar

KEY PLAYERS

ABHISHEK BANERJEE, TMC
Seat: Diamond Harbour

TMC's National General Secretary Banerjee is a two-term MP from here. In 2014, he was the youngest MP in the LS. He is also the nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. Hindus make 55% of population, Muslim 35%

SAIRA SHAH HALIM, CPI (M)
Seat: Kolkata Dakshin

The political newbie is credited with CPI(M)'s win in 2022 Ballygunge bypoll. But, it might be tough for her to win this TMC bastion. Mamata Banerjee holds a record of being an unbeaten 6-term MP from here (1991 to 2011).

BIHAR

NO OF CANDIDATES: 134

Phases: 7 | Phase 7 seats: 8

Constituencies: Nalanda, Patna Sahib, Pataliputra, Arrah, Buxar, Sasaram, Karakat and Jahanabad

KEY PLAYERS

MISA BHARTI, RJD
Seat: Pataliputra

Bharti is the eldest daughter of former chief minister Lalu Prasad Yadav. She is contesting against BJP's Ram Kripal Yadav, to whom she lost in 2014 and 2019. This time, Bharti is pinning her hopes on the incumbency factor.

RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD, BJP
Seat: Patna Sahib

Ravi Shankar Prasad is a senior advocate in Supreme Court and a sitting MP. Prasad defeated actor-turned-politician Shatrughan Sinha in the 2019 general election. Patna Sahib has been a BJP bastion since the seat came into existence in 2008.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 37

Phases: 1 | Phase 7 seats: 4

Constituencies: Kangra, Mandi, Hamirpur, Shimla

KEY PLAYERS

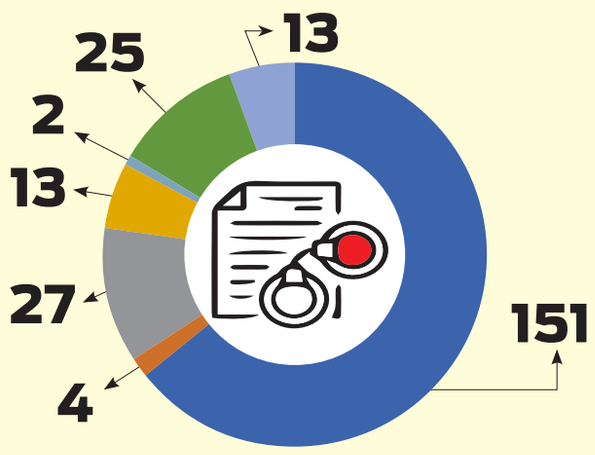
KANGANA RANAUT, BJP
Seat: Mandi

BJP has fielded Kangana Ranaut from Mandi against Congress' Vikramaditya Singh, heir of the Rampur royal family and son of ex-CM Virbhadra Singh. The seat has been held by Singh's mother Pratibha Singh since 2004. Mandi has been a Congress stronghold with Virbhadra having won from here thrice in 1971, 1980 and 2009. However, Kangana, who is also a Bollywood actor, is banking on Modi wave for her victory.

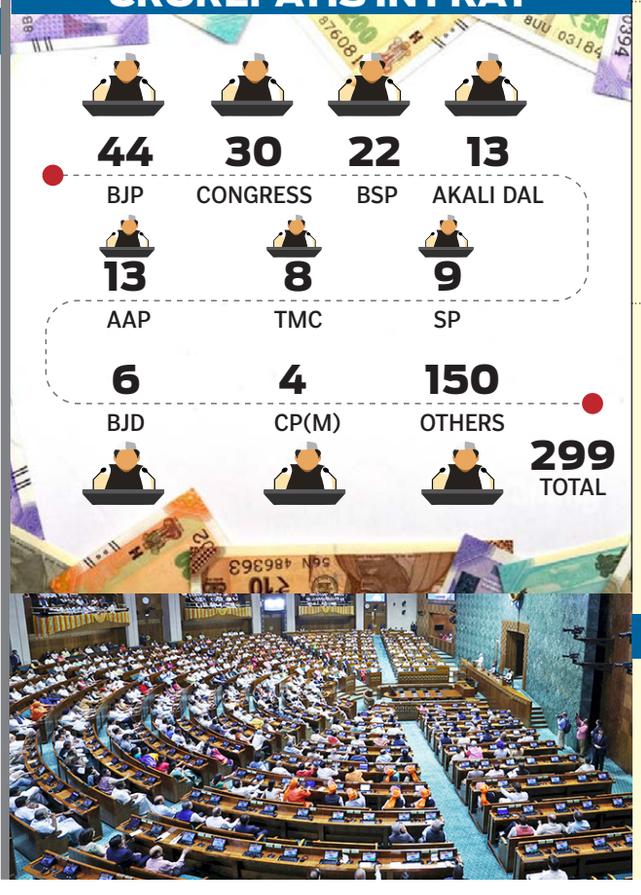
ANAND SHARMA, CONGRESS
Seat: Kangra

Sharma is a four-time Rajya Sabha MP, a former Union minister, and a prominent member of Congress Working Committee. His campaigning revolves around "threat to the Constitution," Agniveer, unemployment, and BJP's "failure" to create two crore jobs annually. BJP's Rajeev Bhardwaj is likely to give a tough fight.

TOTAL CRIMINAL CASES



CROREPATIS IN FRAY



RICHEST CANDIDATES

Harsimrat Kaur Badal
Constituency: Bathinda
Party: Shiromani Akali Dal
Assets: ₹198.5 cr

Baijayant Panda
Constituency: Kendrapara
Party: BJP
Assets: ₹148.1 cr

Sanjay Tandon
Constituency: Chandigarh
Party: BJP
Assets: ₹111.8 cr

ODISHA

NO OF CANDIDATES: 66

Phases: 4 | Phase 7 seats: 6

Constituencies: Mayurbhanj, Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara and Jagatsinghpur

KEY PLAYERS

BAIJAYANT JAY PANDA, BJP
Seat: Kendrapara

He is BJP's National Vice President and two-time MP from here. Panda was suspended from BJD for alleged anti-party activities in 2018. He left BJD to join BJP in 2019 after a fall out with CM Naveen Patnaik.

LEKHASRI SAMANTSINGHAR, BJD
Seat: Balasore

Samantsinghar is the former Odisha unit vice-president of BJP. She joined BJD after being denied BJP ticket from Kandhamal seat. Samantsighar had been a staunch critic of Naveen Patnaik government describing it as corrupt.

JHARKHAND

NO OF CANDIDATES: 52

Phases: 4 | Phase 7 seats: 3

Constituencies: Rajmahal, Dumka, Godda

KEY PLAYERS

SITA SOREN, BJP
Seat: Dumka

Sita Soren, a long time member of JMM and sister-in-law of former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, is a three-time MLA from the Jama in Dumka seat. She joined BJP in March when JMM denied her ticket to contest from Dumka. She had claimed that despite her winning elections, she was not included in Jharkhand Cabinet.

NALIN SOREN, JMM
Seat: Dumka

Nalin Soren is an MLA from the Shikaripara Assembly segment, having won the seat seven times in a row. BJP is eyeing a second consecutive win, whereas JMM is aiming to regain its lost stronghold.

PUNJAB

NO OF CANDIDATES: 328

Phases: 1 | Phase 7 seats: 13

Constituencies: Gurdaspur, Amritsar, Khadoor Sahib, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Anandpur Sahib, Ludhiana, Fatehgarh Sahib, Faridkot, Firozpur, Bathinda, Sangrur, Patiala

KEY PLAYERS

TARANJEET SINGH SANDHU SAMUDRI
BJP
Seat: Amritsar

Former Indian ambassador to the US, Sandhu is the third diplomat following Union Ministers Hardeep Singh Puri and S Jaishankar to make political debut under the Modi administration.

DHARAMVIR GANDHI, CONGRESS
Seat: Patiala

The former MP quit AAP in 2016 to form his own party, National People's Party, which he later merged with Congress. He is favoured for his philanthropic work during the Covid pandemic.

CHANDIGARH

NO OF CANDIDATES: 19

Phases: 1 | Phase 7 seats: 1

Constituencies: Chandigarh

KEY PLAYERS

MANISH TEWARI, CONGRESS
Seat: Chandigarh

Tiwari is a two-time Lok Sabha MP who is the sitting MP from Anandpur Sahib constituency. His poll promises include restoring 'planned city' image of Chandigarh. An advocate by profession, Tewari is also an author and a regular guest columnist.

SANJAY TANDON, BJP
Seat: Chandigarh

Tandon replaced incumbent MP Kirron Kher. He had also been Municipal councillor for 14 years and aims to score hat-trick on the seat. He is the former BJP president of Chhattisgarh governor Balramji Tandon.

AGE GROUP OF CANDIDATES

PHOTO: PTI

Delhi court extends Sisodia's judicial custody till 3 July

New Delhi, 31 May
A Delhi court on Friday extended till 3 July the judicial custody (JC) of AAP leader Manish Sisodia in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam. Special Judge Kaveri Baweja extended Sisodia's remand after he was produced before the court through video conference from jail on expiry of the judicial custody granted earlier. The judge also asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) to supply a copy of the charge sheet, filed recently by the central probe agency, to Sisodia and other co-accused after redacting the name of a protected witness.
The judge granted a month to the counsel of those accused in the case to go through the documents at the ED office.
The counsel appearing for co-accused and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh told the court that it is likely to take 90 to 100 hours to peruse the documents. The counsel for other accused also mentioned the time they need for going through them.—*PTI*

WB: 5 TMC workers injured as ISF members hurl

KOLKATA, 31 MAY

At least five Trinamool Congress workers were injured after bombs were hurled at them allegedly by ISF supporters at Bhangore in South 24 Parganas district of West Bengal, police said on Friday.Bhangore's Indian Secular Front (ISF) MLA Nawsad Siddique, however, dismissed the allegations and said that the TMC workers hurled bombs at ISF supporters but their own party men were injured in the incident. Bhangore under Jadavpur Lok Sabha constituency will go to polls in the last phase on Saturday.The incident took place when the TMC workers were returning home on Thursday.—*PTI*

Cash, drugs worth ₹801 cr seized in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 31 MAY

Law enforcement agencies have seized unaccounted cash, liquor and valuables worth Rs 801.47 crore so far since the Model Code of Conduct came into force, said Punjab Chief Electoral Officer Sibin C on Friday. He said the total seizures comprised narcotics worth Rs 716.78 crore, Rs 26.89 crore unaccounted cash, liquor worth Rs 26.75 crore, precious metals worth Rs 23.86 crore and freebies worth Rs 7.17 crore. The Punjab CEO said that in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the seizures were to the tune of Rs 284 crore. Polling for 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab will be held on 1 June.—*PTI*

Jakhar says BJP booths forcibly removed in Punjab

CHANDIGARH 31 MAY

Punjab BJP chief Sunil Jakhar on Friday filed a complaint with the state chief electoral officer against the alleged forcible removal of his party's booths in two villages of Faridkot and Sangrur districts.He requested the CEO to ensure the safety and security of his party's booths, particularly in rural areas.Polling for 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab will be held on 1June . He said such actions not only jeopardise the integrity of the electoral process but also undermine the democratic rights of citizens. The BJP had highlighted the need for the deployment of central forces, ensuring 100 percent videography of polling process, conducting flag marches, and issuing directives to prevent disruptions on the polling day.

—*PTI*

CONGRESS EXITS EXIT POLL DEBATES

BJP calls this proof of Cong accepting defeat

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Congress has decided not to participate in any Lok Sabha exit poll debates on the television channels and said it does not want to indulge in speculation and slugfest for TRP.

Congress spokesperson and media department chairperson Pawan Khera said the voters have cast their votes and their verdict has been secured.

"The results will be out on 4th June. Prior to that, we do not see any reason to indulge in speculation and slugfest for TRP," he said in a statement shared on X.

"The Indian National Congress will not participate in the debates on Exit Polls. The purpose of any debate should be to inform the people. We will happily partake in debates from 4th June onwards," Khera said in a statement.

The decision was taken after consultations within the party, the sources said. BJP president JP Nadda on Friday claimed that the Congress' decision to not participate in exit poll debates amounts to an "unequivocal confirmation" that the opposition party has conceded the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The Congress has decided not to participate in any Lok Sabha exit poll debates on the television channels PHOTO: PTI

In a post on X, he asked voters not to waste their votes in the seventh and last phase of the polls on Saturday as the Congress usually opts out when it doesn't expect favourable results but has no compunction showing up if it thinks it has even an outside chance.

"Their hypocrisy is not lost on anyone. Let no one in Phase 7 waste their vote on them," he said.Nadda's swipe at the opposition party came after it announced its decision to not participate in any Lok Sabha exit poll debates on news channels, saying it does not want to indulge in speculation and slugfest for TRPs.

"The results will be out on 4th June. Prior to that, we do not see any reason to indulge in speculation and slugfest for TRP," Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said in a statement.

Nadda retorted, "Congress's decision is an unequivocal confirmation that the Congress has conceded the 2024 Lok Sabha elections."

—*PTI*

New LS members to stay at Western Court hostel

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Lok Sabha Secretariat on Friday said it is ready to welcome members of the 18th Lok Sabha with a slew of measures in place to ensure their seamless registration.

Transit accommodation in the Western Court Annexe or state bhavans will be provided to the newly-elected members who are not already in possession of government accommodation here till they are provided regular accommodation by the House Committee of Lok Sabha.

A team has been assigned the task of keeping a close tab on the Election Commission website on 4 June when the votes are counted and entering the contact details of successful candidates on a near real-time basis.The team, using a software application, would be able to check whether the successful candidate is a new MP or a re-elected one.

The same information would be shared with the liaison officers through a software application to make further data entry of their tour programmes.

PHOTO: PTI

- A team has been assigned the task of keeping a close tab on the Election Commission website on 4 June

. The Central Government Health Scheme medical posts will function on a 24x7 basis in North Avenue and South Avenue and near Western Court Annexe to extend Medical facilities to the members.Ambulance services will also be available 24x7 for the members. To deal with health emergencies, nearby hospitals have also been sensitised.

—*PTI*

Cong accuses R'than govt of suppressing heat deaths

JAIPUR, 31 MAY

The Congress on Friday accused the BJP-led government of suppressing the number of deaths caused by the intense heat battering Rajasthan while claiming that more than 100 people have died of heat stroke in the state.

The Congress' Rajasthan unit chief Govind Singh Dotasra alleged that the authorities are hiding the actual number under pressure from the state government to avoid paying compensation.

The Rajasthan government on Thursday announced that five peoplehad died from heat stroke and added that reports about a higher toll being circulated in the media were "beyond facts".

Dotasra on Friday claimed that "more than 100 deaths have occurred" in the state.

—*PTI*

'TAKE CARE OF MY PARENTS'

Will return to jail on 2 June, won't bow down: Kejri

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said he will be surrendering on 2 June and asserted that he will not bow down even if he is harassed in jail.

The AAP national convenor was granted interim bail by the Supreme Court till 1 June for Lok Sabha election campaigning. After being released from jail, Kejriwal campaigned in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Delhi and Maharashtra."I have to surrender on 2 June and I do not know how long I will stay in jail this time. I am going to jail for saving this country from dictatorship and I am proud of it," the Chief Minister told a virtual press conference.

"They tried to break me. They stopped my medicines while I was in jail. My weight reduced by six kg after being arrested.," Kejriwal said.

"Today I want to ask something from you for my family. My parents are very old, my mother is very ill. I will worry a lot about her in jail. Please take care of them," he requested his supporters .

Doctors have advised several tests and "they feel this could be a sign of some underlying medical condition", he added.

Kejriwal said he will leave his residence around 3pm on Sunday to surrender at Tihar jail.

"They will try to harass me more but I will not bow down. After going back to jail, I will be worried about you (people). I want to assure you that your services won't stop. I will soon start providing Rs 1,000 to my mothers and sisters," he said, referring to a scheme to give Rs 1,000 monthly honorarium.

A Delhi court is likely to hear on Saturday an application moved by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seeking interim bail for a week on medical grounds in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam.Special Judge Kaveri Baweja had on 30 May directed the ED to file its response to Kejriwal's plea by 1 June, when period of his interim bail, granted by Supreme Court, ends.The court had also directed the ED to file its response by 7 June to Kejriwal's plea seeking regular bail in the case.The top court had on 10 May granted 21-day interim bail to the chief minister to enable him to campaign during the polls. —*PTI*

SHAH IN TIRUPATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and wife Sonal Shah visit Sri Venkateswara Swamy Temple at Tirumala, in Tirupati district, ahead of the last phase of polling PHOTO: PTI

CONG TAKES A DIG AT PM OVER FLOOD IN NORTH EAST

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge took a dig at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the "grim" flood situation in Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram, and Sikkim on Friday.

Expressing his concern about the flood situation, Kharge took to X, saying, "We do not expect Prime Minister Modi to visit Manipur, but the least he could do is extend help to the distressed people of Manipur and other NE states.".

He said, "We expect the Union and the state governments to provide immediate relief and expedite the rescue efforts. While in Manipur, thousands are displaced as about 25,000 houses have been damaged. Over 2 lakh people have been affected in Assam."

—*ANI*

If you have faith in God then meditate at home: Kharge to Modi

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi meditates at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial in Kanniyakumari for two days, Congress National President Mallikarjun Kharge said on Friday that politics and religion should never be brought together and if you have faith in God, then do it at your home.

"Whatever he (Modi) may say, the people of the country have decided that they won't accept the leadership of PM Modi. Inflation and unemployment have worked in this election. The issue of the constitution and democracy are also there in people's minds. In Andhra, they (BJP) will get some (seats) but in Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra. Congress has the advantage.

In UP also, we will get more seats due to the alliance. I think the alliance's government will be formed," Mallikarjun Kharge said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meditates at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, in Kanyakumari on Friday PHOTO: ANI

got to know about Mahatma Gandhi after the 1982 'Gandhi' movie.Reacting to it, Kharge said, "If a person from Gujarat does not know about Mahatma Gandhi then what can we say? Why are you not promoting the man whom we consider the father of the nation? He was a Gujarati too. We have respect for him but you chose to go with Godse." —*ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

BIBHAV KUMAR SENT TO 14 DAY JUDICIAL CUSTODY

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

A court here on Friday remanded Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's aide Bibhav Kumar, who has been accused of assaulting AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal, in judicial custody for 14 days.
Kumar, personal assistant to Kejriwal, allegedly assaulted Maliwal at the chief minister's official residence on 13 May.

Metropolitan Magistrate Gaurav Goyal allowed the Delhi Police's plea seeking judicial custody for Kumar, who was produced before him on expiry of his three- day police custody.

Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court has reserved its order on maintainability of Kumar's plea challenging his arrest.

Earlier on Monday, Kumar's bail plea was dismissed by a sessions court which said there appeared to be no "pre-meditation" by Maliwal in lodging the FIR and that her allegations could not be "swiped away".

Kumar was arrested on May 18. He was sent to police custody for five days the same day by a magisterial court which observed that his anticipatory bail plea had become infructuous because of his arrest.

He was sent to four-day judicial custody last Friday.

The FIR against Kumar was registered on 16 May under various Indian Penal Code provisions, including for criminal intimidation, assault or criminal force on a woman with the intent to disrobe her and attempt to commit culpable homicide.

The Delhi High Court on Friday reserved order on the issue of maintainability of a plea by Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's close aide Bibhav Kumar challenging his arrest in connection with the alleged assault on AAP MP Swati Maliwal at the Chief Minister's residence earlier this month.

The senior counsel, appearing for the police, opposed issuance of notice on the petition on the grounds that it was not maintainable. —*PTI*

WHEN WORDS HURT

Barbs & name calling: Campaigning went down path of insults

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

'Vish guru', 'anubhavi chor', 'do shehzade'... As Election 2024 hurtles towards result day in a medley of 'mangalsutra, mujra, mutton, machli' and other barbs, these may sound like character names from Hindi comics of yore. Instead, these are the mocking, sometimes vicious monikers given by political rivals to each other.

'Puppet king' of 'tempo billionaires': Rahul attacks Modi
Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'puppet king' of 'tempo billionaires' over his remarks on the Congress receiving 'cash loaded in tempos' from 'Adani and Ambani'.

Modi the 'vish guru'
Congress leader Jairam Ramesh lashed out at Modi over his speeches at election rallies, saying the language he used suggests he is not a 'vishwa guru" but a 'vish guru'. 'Vishwa guru' refers to a world leader. 'Vish' means poison.

Modi 'sva-ghoshit bhagwan'
Rahul Gandhi mocked Modi over his not "born biologically" remark by saying an ordinary person would have been taken to a psychiatrist had he/she uttered the statement. His colleague Jairam Ramesh went on to dub the prime minister 'sva-ghoshit bhagwan' (self-declared god) while attacking the BJP over the Agnipath scheme.

INDIA bloc performing 'mujra' for its vote bank
Modi accused the INDIA bloc of "enslavement" and performing "mujra" for the Muslim vote bank and vowed to thwart alleged attempts to

Prime Minister Narendra Modi Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and SP leader Akhilesh Yadav PHOTO: PTI

rob Dalits and backward classes of reservations by the opposition grouping.

The four Ms, 'mujra, mangalsutra, machhli, mutton'
A video of RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav eating fish and Rahul Gandhi and Lalu Prasad consuming mutton allegedly during the month of Sawan was splashed in a big way by the BJP. Modi said opposition parties were displaying their Mughal mindset and teasing the majority community by sharing the videos to consolidate their vote banks.
He also accused the INDIA bloc of performing 'mujra' for the Muslim vote bank.
At a rally in Rajasthan, the prime minister claimed the Congress' election manifesto promises to snatch away Hindu women's 'mangalsutra' and redistribute it to 'infiltrators' and 'those who have more children' - alluding to Muslims. The issue was seized by opposition leaders, including Congress chief Kharge and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, slamming Modi for the remarks.

'Jhoothon ka sardar' Modi
Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, speaking in Haryana, sought the BJP's response on its promise of two crore jobs each year, Rs 15 lakh in everyone's bank account, and doubling of farmers' income. He then called the PM 'jhoothon ka sardar' or the king of liars.

'Bada pappu', 'chhota pappu': Kangana mocks Rahul, Vikramaditya Singh
The actor referred to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Vikramaditya Singh, who is also her rival in Mandi, as 'bada pappu' and 'chhota pappu'. She also called the Congress "a disease" and "termite" left by Britishers.

INDIA bloc 'congregation of scamsters'
Modi said at Bihar rally that the INDIA bloc was a "congregation of scamsters" and its leaders stood for corruption, appeasement politics.

'Job-eater' BJP
West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dubbed the BJP "job-eater" after the Calcutta High Court scrapped the recruitment of nearly 26,000 teachers in the state. Banerjee accused the BJP of "conspiring" to stall the TMC government's decision.
Modi also called the Congress a 'mureed' (disciple) of Pakistan and said Islamabad was rooting for Gandhi as India's next Prime Minister.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Toll mounts to 4 in Puri unit explosion as another dies

BHUBANESWAR, 31 MAY

The death toll in the firecracker explosion in Odisha's Puri mounted to four on Friday after another person succumbed to injuries, a senior official said. Three people, including a minor, had died and 33 others were injured after a stockpile of firecrackers exploded during Lord Jagannath's Chandan Jatra festival in Puri on Wednesday evening. Another injured person has died in hospital, while 26 others were undergoing treatment, a statement issued by the office of the Special Relief Commissioner (SRC) said. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has ordered an administrative-level inquiry into the incident, and announced ex gratia of Rs 4 lakh to the next of kin of each deceased. *—PTI*

Hoax bomb threat halts Srinagar Airport ops for 1 hr

SRINAGAR, 31 MAY

Flight operations at the Srinagar International Airport had to be halted for an hour on Friday after a bomb threat as the authorities took preventive measures, officials said. The Air Traffic Control at the Srinagar Airport received a bomb threat on an Air Vistara flight from New Delhi, prompting a response from the authorities, including the Central Industrial Security Force, which is responsible for the security at the airport, the officials said. They said a threat call was made to the airport around the noon about the flight, which had 178 passengers onboard. A thorough search of the plane was carried out and bomb disposal squads and sniffer dogs were also deployed to check any suspicious items, they said. After an exhaustive search, no explosives were found on the plane, they added. *—PTI*

Kerala announces to intensify Nipah prevention efforts

T'PURAM, 31 MAY

Kerala Health Minister Veena George has announced that Nipah prevention efforts will be intensified in the state, particularly during the critical months of May to September when the virus is most likely to spread. Minister George emphasized the importance of extreme caution and outlined several key preventive measures. She urged the public not to destroy bat habitats, as disturbing these could increase the risk of virus transmission. Additionally, she advised against consuming fruits that have been bitten by birds and drinking honey from banana peels, both of which could be contaminated by bats. *—ANI*

6 injured, 2 shops gutted in TN cylinder explosion

TIRUNELVELI, 31 MAY

At least six people were injured, and two shops were gutted in the fire following a gas cylinder explosion at a shop in Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu, police officials said. According to the police, the incident took place on Thursday at a samosa shop on North Radha Road in Tirunelveli, where 6 people, including the shop employee, were injured. Following this, the fire service personnel rushed to the spot and extinguished the fire, the police added. Earlier on 11 May, an explosion took place at a firecracker manufacturing factory at Narayanapuram Pudur, near Sivakasi in Virudhunagar district. No casualties were reported in the fire incident. Fire tenders reached the spot immediately after receiving information about the incident and extinguished the fire. *—ANI*

DGCA issues notice after AI flight delayed by 24 hrs

AI is under fire after flyers faint due to no AC in plane

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Passengers of a San Francisco-bound Air India flight faced a harrowing time on Thursday at the Delhi airport as some of them fainted due to non-functioning of the aircraft's air-conditioning system. They also had to wait in the aerobridge before the flight was finally rescheduled for Friday.

There were around 200 passengers onboard the Boeing 777 aircraft that was to operate flight AI 183. The flight was originally scheduled to take off at around 3.30 pm on Thursday but was delayed by around six hours before getting rescheduled.

Also, an Air India flight from Mumbai to San Francisco, which was originally scheduled to take off at 4 pm on 24 May, was rescheduled and finally departed at around 5.30 pm on 25 May. The inordinate delay was due to multiple reasons, including a technical glitch.

Following the incident, aviation watchdog DGCA on Friday issued a showcause notice to Air India for inordinate delay.

Both flights were delayed and passengers were put to discomfort due to insufficient cooling in the cabin. Further, repeated incidents of passengers being put to discomfort by Air India in violation of DGCA norms have come to the notice of the regulator, as per the showcause notice.

At first, the aircraft was changed due to a technical glitch and the passengers boarded another plane, wherein the air-conditioning system was not working and as a result some of those onboard fainted. The plane had aged people and children, who were feeling uneasy. Later, at around 10.00 pm on Thursday, the flight was rescheduled, a woman passenger said.

According to her, the revised departure time was about 8.00 pm and passengers had boarded the aircraft at around 7.20 pm. With the air conditioning system non-functional, passengers were agitated and after almost an hour, they came out. The passengers had to wait for nearly an hour in the aerobridge before the gates were opened to go back to the airport, she said.

An airline official said the flight is scheduled to take off at around 3 pm on Friday.

The airline official said the aircraft had developed a technical issue. Due to the delay, the crew had crossed the Flight Duty Time Limitation and also if the flight had taken off, it would have reached San Francisco when there are night landing restrictions there, the official added. *—PTI*

Air India flight passengers sitting on the floor following the delay. There were 200 passengers onboard PHOTO: X/ @39ABHISHEK

Woman delivers baby on bus in Kerala

THRISSUR, 31 MAY

A 37-year-old woman from Malappuram district gave birth to a baby girl on a KSRTC bus in Thrissur, Kerala.

The incident took place on Wednesday when the woman, travelling with her husband from Thrissur to Thottilpalam in Kozhikode, began experiencing severe labour pains as the bus crossed Peramangalam village.

In response to the situation, the bus driver promptly altered the route and headed directly to Amala Hospital in Thrissur, notifying the hospital about the emergency. Upon reaching the hospital, the woman was already in an advanced stage of labour.

Passengers were deboarded to allow doctors and nurses to provide immediate medical attention. Visuals shared on social media show the bus stopped at the hospital, with staff members rushing to assist the mother and her newborn inside the vehicle. The medical team brought essential equipment onto the bus to ensure a safe delivery.

Dr. Yasir Sulaiman of Amala Hospital stated, "The initiation of labour pain had already begun. At that point, it was impossible for us to shift her to the emergency department. We had to take out the child and cut the umbilical cord there itself. We ensured that the baby and the mother were safe. Currently, both are doing well. It was a different day and a new thing for us." Following the successful delivery, the mother and her baby girl were transferred to the hospital for further care. Hospital officials have confirmed that both mother and child are in good health and are not facing any complications. *—ANI*

'Berozgar Chaiwala', a venture of two educated brothers, located at the roadside in Patna PHOTO: PTI

Patna's 'Berozgar Chaiwala' serves tea with social message

PATNA, 31 MAY

Patna native Sahil Kumar, a graduate from a city-based college, has channelised his frustration about not getting a job into a tea-selling venture with a quirky name, 'Berozgar Chaiwala', more to serve a social message than the popular beverage.

His brother Suraj Kumar, a partner in the small business, quips it is a "start-up". He also points out the irony of the situation as loudspeaker-mounted campaign vehicles run by various candidates blare out their list of promises, including jobs. These vehicles pass daily by their pushcart.

"The candidates, while campaigning in the streets, make tall promises. But they back out when they are in a position to do something for the students," Suraj, 24, said. Sahil has a BCom degree.

Despite hard work the brothers did not get the right opportunity or proper salary. So, they started the tea stall to show the society that a person is jobless despite education. *—PTI*

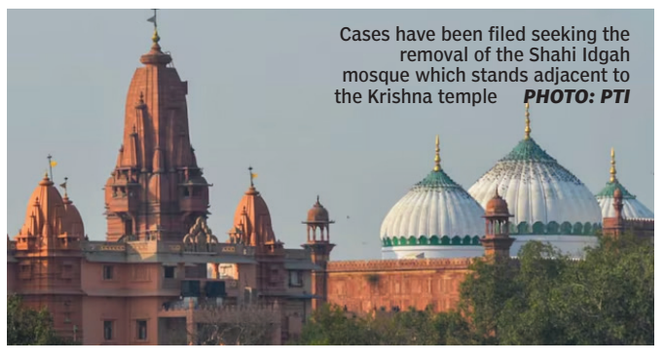
HC reserves judgment on Krishna Janmasthan-Shahi Idgah cases

PRAYAGRAJ, 31 MAY

The Allahabad High Court on Friday reserved its judgment on the maintainability of cases related to the Krishna Janmasthan-Shahi Idgah dispute in Mathura.

Several cases have been filed seeking the "removal" of the Shahi Idgah mosque which stands adjacent to the Krishna temple, with litigants claiming that the Aurangazeb-era mosque was built after the demolition of the temple.

The Muslim side, however, argued that the suits are barred under the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, and some other laws.



Cases have been filed seeking the removal of the Shahi Idgah mosque which stands adjacent to the Krishna temple PHOTO: PTI

The Act prohibits the conversion of any place of worship and aims to maintain the religious character of such places as it existed on 15 August, 1947. The case is being heard by Justice Mayank Kumar Jain. *—PTI*

Pune crash: Minor's dad, grandad remanded

PUNE, 31 MAY

A local court in Pune on Friday remanded the father and grandfather of the minor involved in the Porsche case in judicial custody for 14 days over their roles in the alleged kidnapping and wrongful confinement of their driver.

Real estate developer Vishal Agarwal and his father were produced before the court of Judicial Magistrate (First Class) AA Pande at the end of their police remand.

According to the police, the driver was with the juvenile in the Porsche when the luxury car hit a two-wheeler killing two software engineers in Pune's Kalyani Nagar area on 19 May.

The father-son duo allegedly threatened the driver to take the blame for the accident. *—PTI*

DERELICTION OF DUTY

6 J&K officials suspended after 22 killed in bus accident

JAMMU, 31 MAY

Six transport department officials in Jammu and Kashmir were suspended for alleged dereliction of duty on Friday, a day after 22 people were killed and 64 injured in a bus accident in Jammu district.

The tragic incident occurred on Thursday, when the bus carrying 86 devotees from Haryana's Kurukshetra and heading towards the Shiv Khori shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district skidded off the Jammu-Poonch highway and plunged into a 150-foot gorge. The driver lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a blind curve at the Tungi morh in the Chowki Chora area.

Transport department Secretary Niraj Kumar ordered the suspensions and a probe after a high-level meeting was chaired by Principal Secretary of the Home department Chandraker Bharti.

"Pending enquiry into the conduct and dereliction of duties, officials posted in the Regional Transport Office in Kathua (Lakhanpur) are placed under suspension with immediate effect and are attached in the office of Transport Commissioner, Jammu," Kumar said in an order.

The suspended officials are Ranjeev Bhasin (motor vehicle inspector), Sumit Magotra (junior assistant) and multi-tasking staff (MTS) members Ashwani Kumar, Aman Kumar, Keshav Singh and Rakesh Kumar.

An inquiry into the conduct and performance of the suspended officials will be led by Additional Secretary (Technical) Paramvir Singh, who will submit a report with recommendations within a week, Kumar said.

The officials have been attached to the transport commissioner's office in Jammu, pending the outcome of the enquiry. The Jammu district magistrate has already initiated a magisterial inquiry into the incident. The district administration is closely monitoring the treatment of those injured in the accident, besides communicating with authorities in the passengers' home regions of Hathras and Aligarh and in Uttar Pradesh. The Jammu administration announced on Thursday that it has set up a 24-hour helpline to provide information and assistance to the relatives of the victims. *—PTI*

Rescue work underway after a bus fell off the Jammu-Rajouri highway on Thursday PHOTO: PTI

ACB BEGINS PROBE IN RAJKOT GAME ZONE FIRE

RAJKOT, 31 MAY

The Gujarat Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Friday launched an inquiry against the officials held in connection with the 25 May Rajkot game zone fire tragedy, which killed 27 people including children, and seized documents from their homes and offices following searches.

The probe is in the preliminary stage and nothing incriminating has been found in the searches, said KH Gohil, the ACB's Assistant Director for Rajkot. The ACB stepped in to probe after the Rajkot police on Thursday arrested Rajkot's Town Planning Officer (TPO) MD Sagathia, assistant TPOs Mukesh Makwana and Gautam Joshi and former station officer of the Kalavad Road Fire Station Rohit Vigora. Joshi and Vigora are among the nine officials who were suspended after the state government held them responsible for "gross negligence in the game zone to operate without necessary approvals". *—PTI*

NO RELIEF IN SIGHT

2L in despair as floods ravage Assam

GUWAHATI, 31 MAY

Assam's flood situation remained grim on Friday with over two lakh people affected in nine districts, following incessant rainfall in the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, officials said.

Altogether, six people died in the flood, rain and storms in the state since 28 May, they said. Nagaon, Karimganj, Hailakandi, West Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai, Golaghat, Karbi Angling and Dima Hasao districts were severely affected.

Road connectivity of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Barak Valley with other parts of the state and the northeast region has been affected with vehicles stranded, following 20 metre-stretch of the National Highway-6 being washed away by heavy rain in Lumslum area of Meghalaya.

Cachar is the worst affected with 1,12,246 people reeling under the deluge, followed by 37,000 in Karimganj, 22,058 in Hojai and 14,308 in Hailakandi.

A crop area of 3238.8 hectares has also been submerged, while 2,34,535 animals have been affected.

The Brahmaputra and Barak rivers along with their tributaries are flowing above the danger mark at several places in the flood-hit districts.

Life came to a standstill in the three districts of Barak Valley and Dima Hasao, while intermittent rainfall and thunderstorms were reported from other affected districts on Thursday, officials said.

Life has been hit due to relentless rain in Dima Hasao district, severely impacting road connectivity throughout the district.Train services, cancelled or short-terminated due to landslides along the Haflong-Badarpur rail route, are yet to be restored, the officials said.

The southwest monsoon has entered Assam and other parts of the Northeast region ahead of its scheduled time due to the effect of cyclone Remal, according to the Indian Meteorological Department. *—PTI*

Villagers wade through a flooded area following rains in the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, in Hojai district, Assam on Friday PHOTO: PTI

Rain triggers waterlogging at Raj Bhavan in Manipur

IMPHAL, 31 MAY

Waterlogging has been reported at the Raj Bhavan in Manipur following torrential rain in the last few days in the aftermath of cyclone Remal, officials said on Friday.

Three persons have died, while thousands were affected by floods triggered by the downpour in the Imphal valley, they said.

Water accumulated at the Raj Bhavan premises after embankments of Imphal river were breached at various places, a senior official said. "The situation at the Raj Bhavan has improved considerably compared to the last two days. The inundated areas will be cleared soon depending on the overall weather condition," he said.

The unprecedented flooding in Imphal has led to large parts of Imphal area being submerged in water. The flood level needs to be reduced swiftly, he added. *—PTI*

10 poll officials die due to heatstroke in Bihar

PATNA, 31 MAY

Fourteen people, including 10 polling personnel, have died due to heatstroke in Bihar in the last 24 hours, officials said on Friday afternoon.

In a statement issued by the Disaster Management Department, most of the fatalities were reported from Bhojpur, where five officials on election duty died of heatstroke.

The process of granting ex-gratia to the families of the deceased has been initiated, said the statement.

The state is reeling under sizzling heat as the mercury crossed 44 degrees Celsius at several places. On Thursday, Buxar was the hottest at 47.1 degrees Celsius. Due to the heatwave all schools, coaching institutes and anganwadi centres were shut till 8 June. *—PTI*

Wildfires flare up in U'khand after brief lull

DEHRADUN, 31 MAY

Forest fires have flared up again in various parts of Uttarakhand, with two major fire incidents in the Gauhari range of the Rajaji Tiger Reserve and the trek route to Nilkanth Mahadev temple in Rishikesh.

The blaze that broke out in Gauhari range of the reserve on Thursday evening affected around 1.5 hectares of forest cover, Rajaji Reserve Director Saket Badola said on Friday.

The fire in Gauhari range of the reserve has been brought under control but fire fighting continues in an area spread over one hectare in the forest near Pundrasu. Wildfires flared up on Thursday with fire incidents in 11 areas affecting more than 13 hectares of forest land across the state, additional chief conservator of forest Nishant Verma said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X/@WPSG

Singapore's Indian-origin MP to face trail in Oct

SINGAPORE, 31 MAY

Singapore's Indian-origin Leader of the Opposition and Workers' Party Chief Pritam Singh is set to go on trial in mid-October on two charges of lying in Parliament to a Committee of Privileges over former fellow parliamentarian Raeesah Khan's case, according to a media report. At a pre-trial conference held in chambers away from the public and media on Friday morning, 16 days of trial were fixed for him before Deputy Principal District Judge Luke Tan, Channel News Asia reported. According to court records, the first segment of the trial is set to begin from 14 to 18 October. Another three periods were set for the trial if necessary, spanning 21 to 24 October, 5 to 8 and 11 to 13 November. *—PTI*

London: 9-year-old Indian critical after drive-by shooting

LONDON, 31 MAY

A nine-year-old girl, yet to be formally identified but believed to be from Kerala, is in a critical condition in hospital "fighting for her life" after suffering a gunshot wound in a drive-by shooting from a motorbike in east London. The Metropolitan Police said the girl was inside a restaurant in the Kingsland High Street area of Hackney having dinner with her family when the shooting occurred on Wednesday. Three as yet unnamed men, aged 26, 37 and 42, who were sitting outside the restaurant were taken to hospital for treatment for gunshot wounds and their conditions are said to be "stable, but one potentially faces life changing injuries". Meanwhile, reports emanating from within London's Malayali community have named the girl as Lissel Maria. *—AP*

Slovak PM released from hospital weeks after being shot

BRATISLAVA, 31 MAY

Slovakia's populist Prime Minister Robert Fico has been released from a hospital where he was treated after an assassination attempt. Miriam Lapunikova, the director of the hospital in Banska Bystrica, said on Friday that Fico was transported to his home, where he continues to recover from the attack. Fico lives in the capital, Bratislava. Fico has been recovering from multiple wounds after being shot in the abdomen as he greeted supporters on 15 May in the town of Handlova. Fico immediately underwent a five-hour surgery to treat multiple wounds he suffered in the shooting, followed by another two-hour surgery two days later to remove dead tissue. *—AP*

Ex-Iranian parl speaker registers as a prez candidate

DUBAI, 31 MAY

A former speaker of Iran's parliament registered on Friday as a possible candidate in the Islamic Republic's June 28 presidential election to replace the late Ebrahim Raisi, who was killed in a helicopter crash earlier this month with seven others. Ali Larijani is the first high-profile candidate to register for the contest. He and other serious contenders against Raisi had been barred from running in the 2021 election. Larijani, 66, is viewed as a conservative within Iran's narrow political scene. However, he has increasingly allied himself with former President Hassan Rouhani, whose administration reached a 2015 nuclear deal with a group of world powers. Larijani had positioned himself as a pragmatic candidate in the 2021 vote in which hard-liner Raisi, a protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. *—AP*

114M displaced as nations fail to tackle conflicts: UN

UNITED NATIONS, 31 MAY

The number of people fleeing their homes because of war, violence and persecution has reached 114 million, UN Refugee Chief said on Thursday.

He said the number is climbing because nations have failed to tackle the causes and combatants are refusing to comply with international law.

In a hard-hitting speech, Filippo Grandi criticised UN Security Council, which is charged with maintaining international peace and security, for failing to use its voice to try to resolve conflicts from Gaza, Ukraine and Sudan to Congo, and Myanmar.

Grandi said non-compliance with international humanitarian law means that "parties to conflicts — increasingly everywhere, almost all of them — have stopped respecting the laws of war," though some pretend to do so.

The high commissioner for refugees told the council it's too late for the tens of thousands who have been killed in Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan and other conflicts.

It's also not too late to save millions of people from war, he said.

But the Security Council is increasingly polarised, and its five veto-wielding permanent members are at odds, with the US, Britain and France often opposed to the views of Russia and China.

On the Gaza war, the council has not called for a ceasefire because of Opposition from the US, Israel's closest ally. And on Ukraine, the council has been ineffective as Russia would veto almost any resolution.

Filippo Grandi said it's not too late to save millions from war *PHOTO: PTI*

Grandi called the "atrocious" recent events in Rafah after an Israeli airstrike led to a deadly fire at a camp for displaced Palestinians an example of the "brutal conduct of hostilities meant not only to destroy but also to terrify civilians," who increasingly more often have no choice but to flee.

- The UN Refugee said Gaza is "a reminder of what happens when conflicts and refugee crisis are left unattended" for decades. He also pointed to Syria where after 13 years of conflict, 5.6 million Syrian refugees remain in Lebanon and Jordan.

He said Gaza is "a reminder of what happens when conflicts and refugee crisis are left unattended" for decades. He also pointed to Syria where after 13 years of conflict, 5.6 million Syrian refugees remain in Lebanon and Jordan.

Grandi said violations of international law, including forcing people to flee, are having a devastating effect on people.

For example, in Myanmar, more than 1.5 million people have been displaced by fighting since October, bringing the total to 3 million, he said.

And in Congo, Grandi said, "violence between men with guns is so common that no other place on Earth is as dangerous for women and children than the east of that country."

"But how can members of the United Nations, how can `we the peoples' pay so little attention and have so much inaction in a place where sex with a child can be bought for less than a cold drink?" he asked. "What a shameful stain on humanity!" Grandi said. *—AP*

Trump found guilty on 34 counts in hush money trial

He is the first US ex-president to be convicted of a felony

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 31 MAY

Donald Trump has become the first former US president to be convicted of a felony. This was after a grand jury in New York found him guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records to cover up a payment to silence a porn star ahead of the 2016 presidential election, mounting his legal challenges amidst his bid to return to the White House in November.

In a historic verdict, a panel of 12 Manhattan jurors on Thursday said they unanimously agreed that Trump, 77, falsified business records to conceal a USD 1,30,000 hush money payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels to influence the 2016 contest.

The conviction does not prevent Trump from standing in November's election, but he is almost certain to appeal against it regardless.

Over a six-week trial, the court heard from 22 witnesses, including Daniels, whose alleged sexual encounter with the former president was at the centre of the case.

PHOTO: PTI

I'm an innocent man, and it's okay, I'm fighting for our country.. Our whole country is being rigged right now. And I think it's just a disgrace. We'll fight till the end, and we'll win because our country has gone to hell.

-Donald Trump, former US president

As the verdicts were read, Trump remained silent and still. But the former president spoke to reporters outside the courtroom, calling the trial a "rigged, disgraceful trial" and saying that the "real verdict" will be rendered on Election Day. Prosecutors had argued that, by approving a scheme to disguise the money as legal expenses, Trump broke election law. Trump's sentencing is scheduled for 11 July, four days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he will be formally nominated as the party's presidential candidate against incumbent Joe Biden, an 81-year-old Democrat, in the 5 November elections. For now, Trump has been released without having to pay bail.

Trump alleged that this was done by the Biden administration to wound or hurt a political opponent.

No former president or presumptive party nominee in the US has ever faced a felony conviction. During the trial, the prosecution set out to prove that Trump had falsified records when he repaid his former lawyer Michael Cohen for a hush-money payment to Daniels.

They said he had recorded the reimbursements as legal expenses to circumvent campaign finance laws.

Todd Blanche, Trump's lead lawyer, told Justice Juan Merchan that the court should not allow the verdict, arguing that Cohen committed perjury on the stand. The Trump team's motion to acquit, however, was denied by Justice Merchan.

It is unclear how the verdict will affect the presidential race, although some polls have previously suggested voters in several key swing states would be less likely to vote for Trump if he had a criminal conviction. *—AP*

Russian missiles kill 4 after Biden allows Ukraine to use US arms

KYIV, 31 MAY

Russian ballistic missiles slammed into an apartment block in Kharkiv and killed at least four people in a nighttime attack, Ukrainian officials said Friday.

This was a day after US President Joe Biden gave Kyiv a green light to strike back with American weapons at Russian military assets targeting the country's second-largest city.

Russia launched five S-300/S-400 ballistic missiles at Kharkiv overnight, Ukraine's air force said.

One of them struck a residential building close to midnight and was followed by another missile 25 minutes later that hit first responders, according to regional Governor Oleh Syniehubov. At least 25 people were injured, he said.

Biden's decision allows for US-supplied weapons to be used for "counterfire purposes in the Kharkiv region so Ukraine can hit back against Russian forces that are attacking them or preparing to attack them," one Washington official told The Associated Press.

But the officials, who requested anonymity to discuss the sensitive matter, stressed that the U.S. policy calling on Ukraine not to use American-provided ATACMS or long-range missiles and other munitions to strike offensively inside Russia has not changed.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy & Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson signed a security cooperation ahead of a Nordic summit *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

- That restriction has frustrated Ukrainian officials as the military is unable to order hits on Russian troops massing across the border.

That restriction has frustrated Ukrainian officials as the military is unable to order hits on Russian troops massing across the border — Kharkiv city is only 20km from Russia — or Russian bases used to launch missile attacks.

Meanwhile, Foreign Ministers of Netherlands, Finland, Poland and Germany meet in Czech and gave Ukraine the go-ahead to use munitions to strike inside Russia. *—AP*

S AFRICA HEADS FOR COALITION AS ANC LOSES SUPPORT

JOHANNESBURG, 31 MAY

South Africa was heading closer to the reality of a national coalition government for the first time Friday as partial election results put the ruling African Nation Congress well short of a majority.

With more than half of votes counted across the country's nine provinces, the ANC had received just under 42 per cent of the national vote, according to the early results as counting continued. That represented a huge drop from the 57.5 per cent it received in the last national election in 2019, although the final results from Wednesday's election have not yet been declared.

The commission that runs the election said those would be announced by Sunday, although they could come sooner.

The count from more than 12,000 of the 23,000 polling stations raised the strong possibility that the ANC would need a coalition partner to form a government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term. *—AP*

HIGHEST DEATH TOLL

16 killed as US, UK strike Houthi sites

The US used F/A-18 fighter for the strikes *PHOTO: SCREENGRAB*

DUBAI, 31 MAY

Joint British-US airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others, the rebels said on Friday, the highest publicly acknowledged death toll by the rebels from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over their attacks on shipping.

Three US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe a then-ongoing attack, described the strikes Thursday as hitting a wide range of underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, a Houthi vessel and other facilities. They called it a response to a recent surge in attacks by the Iran-backed militia group on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the Israel-Hamas war.

The US F/A-18 fighter jets involved in the strikes launched from the USS Dwight D Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, officials said. Other US warships in the region also participated.

But the Houthis focused on Friday on just one of the strikes, which they said struck a building housing Hodeida Radio and civilian homes in the port city on the Red Sea. Their Al Masirah satellite news channel aired images of one bloodied man being carried down stairs and others in the hospital, receiving aid.

The Houthis described all those killed and hurt in Hodeida as civilians, something The Associated Press could not immediately confirm. The rebel force that's held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014 includes fighters who often are not in uniform.

Other strikes hit outside of Sanaa near its airport and communication equipment in Taiz, the broadcaster said. Little other information was released on those sites — likely signaling that Houthi military sites had been struck. *—AP*

Pak PM to visit China; will launch 2nd phase of CPEC

ISLAMABAD, 31 MAY

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will embark on a five-day visit to China on Tuesday to further strengthen bilateral ties, the Foreign Office announced on Friday, as the all-weather allies seek to upgrade cooperation under the multi-billion dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Sharif will be in China from 4 to 8 June on the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her weekly briefing.

The visit aims to increase cooperation under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, as the two sides look forward to launching the second phase of the project.

Meanwhile, The Express Tribune reported that the government approved the construction of another road project under the CPEC at a cost of USD 2 billion, paving the way for the signing of its framework agreement during Prime Minister Sharif's visit to Beijing. The Central Development Working Party sanctioned the construction of the Thakot-Raikot 241-km section of the Karakoram Highway. It approved the project at a cost of Rs 567.5 billion. The Karakoram Highway was originally built with the help of China about 50 years ago, and due to the difficult terrain, scores of people died during the construction phase. *—AP*

UN extends arms embargo on Sudan despite appeals

UNITED NATIONS, 31 MAY

The divided UN Security Council voted on Thursday to extend an arms embargo on South Sudan despite appeals from the world's newest nation, the African Union and half a dozen countries including Russia and China to lift or at least ease the restrictive measure.

The US-sponsored resolution got the minimum nine "yes" votes in the 15-member council, with six countries abstaining – Russia, China, Mozambique, Algeria, Sierra Leone and Guyana.

The resolution also extends travel bans and asset freezes on South Sudanese on the UN sanctions blacklist until 31 May, 2025.

US Deputy Ambassador Robert Wood welcomed the resolution's adoption saying extending the UN arms embargo "remains necessary to stem the unfettered flow of weapons into a region awash with guns".

But Russia's Deputy UN Ambassador Anna Evstigneeva accused the United States of ignoring all the positive achievements in South Sudan and focusing on sanctions "which they present as a sort of panacea for all of the country's problems".

South Sudan's UN ambassador Cecilia Adeng told the council that sanctions "impede our progress" and reiterated the country's call for the measures to be lifted. There were high hopes when oil-rich South Sudan gained independence from Sudan in 2011 after a long conflict. But the country slid into a civil war in December 2013 largely based on ethnic divisions when forces loyal to the current president, Salva Kiir, battled those loyal to the current vice president, Riek Machar. *—AP*

EARNS $50,000

12-yr Indian wins Scripps Spelling Bee

WASHINGTON, 31 MAY

Bruhat Soma, a 12-year-old Indian-American seventh-grade student from Florida, has won the Scripps National Spelling Bee after he spelt 29 words correctly in the tiebreaker, maintaining the dominance of the children from the small ethnic community in the prestigious competition.

Bruhat emerged victorious in the Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday, earning more than USD 50,000 in cash and other prizes.

This year's contest came down to a tiebreaker in which Bruhat spelt 29 words correctly in 90 seconds, beating Faizan Zaki, who managed to correctly spell 20 words in the lightning round.

His championship word was "abseil", which is defined as "descent in mountaineering by means of a rope looped over a projection above."

Bruhat Soma, 12, lifts the trophy after winning the Scripps National Spelling Bee, in Oxon Hill *PHOTO: X/@SCRIPPSBEE*

Bruhat went first in the tiebreaker, and after he got through 30 words, it appeared he would be impossible to beat. Faizan's pace was more uneven at the outset. He attempted 25 words but flubbed four of them.

The two final spellers each had 90 seconds to spell as many words as they could from a predetermined list of words while the other speller was sequestered.

While competing, his forehead was marked with a vermilion tika, a Hindu symbol of power and purity. His parents said that Bruhat memorised about 80 per cent of the sacred Hindu texts, the Bhagavad Gita.

"My heart was pumping so fast when I realised I won," Bruhat said. "I had a good feeling I would win because I did pretty good, but yeah, you never know. I still couldn't absorb the moment yet."

Bruhat's father Srinivas Soma is originally from Nalgonda in Telangana.

Coached by 16-year-old former speller Sam Evans, Bruhat previously competed in 2022 (tied for 163rd place) and 2023 (tied for 74th place). } A multifaceted person with many interests and hobbies, he had previously won the Words of Wisdom Bee and SpellPundit Bee before arriving in a Maryland suburb of Washington DC for a prestigious competition. *—AP*

Rupee plunges 20P to settle at 83.49 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

The rupee paired all its early gains and settled with a steep loss of 20 paise at 83.49 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday amid volatile domestic equity markets and unabated outflow of foreign funds. Forex traders said increased month-end demand of greenback by oil marketing companies also weighed on the Indian currency even as it found some support due to lower level of crude oil prices. At the inter-bank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.25 and oscillated between the intra-day high of 83.23 and lowest level of 83.49 during the session. It finally settled at 83.49 (provisional), registering a loss of 20 paise from its previous closing level. On Thursday, the rupee gained 11 paise to close at 83.29 against the US dollar. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 104.64. —*PTI*

Gold rises R50; silver declines R500

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Gold prices gained Rs 50 to Rs 72,900 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday in line with firm trends in the international markets, according to HDFC Securities. The precious metal had closed at Rs 72,850 per 10 grams in the previous session. However, silver prices plunged Rs 500 to Rs 95,500 per kg. It had settled at Rs 96,000 per kg on Thursday. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,341 per ounce, up USD 2 from the previous close. Gold rose slightly on Friday, aided by disappointing US first-quarter GDP data that suggested a downturn in the US economy. However, silver were quoting lower at USD 31.20 per ounce. In the previous session, it had finished at USD 31.65 per ounce. "Gold prices have been stuck in a range so far in the week as the much awaited US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) data will be released later in the day. —*PTI*

IDFC Bank to raise R3,200cr via preferential issue

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

IDFC FIRST Bank has laid a robust foundation with a strong and profitable business model. The Bank is seeing strong traction in raising deposits with customer deposits growing by 42% in FY24 over FY23. The Bank also sees significant upcoming opportunities for loan growth with high asset quality. The overall asset quality of the Bank continues to be good, with GNPA of 1.88% and NNPA of 0.60% as of March 31, 2024. In the retail, rural and sme finance book, the Gross and Net NPA continues to be quite low at 1.38% and 0.44% respectively as of 31 March, 2024. The Bank is also well positioned in terms of experience, team, technology, systems, risk management controls.—*ANI*

Forex reserves down $2 bn after all-time high

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India's forex reserves dropped by USD 2.027 billion to USD 646.673 billion for the week ended 24 May, the Reserve Bank said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the kitty had reached an all-time high of USD 648.7 billion after a jump of USD 4.549 billion. For the week ended 24 May, foreign currency assets, a major component of the reserves, decreased by USD 1.51 billion to USD 567.499 billion, the data released on Friday showed. Expressed in dollar terms, the foreign currency assets include the effect of appreciation or depreciation of non-US units like the euro, pound and yen held in the foreign exchange reserves. Gold reserves decreased by USD 482 million to USD 56.713 billion during the week. Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) were down to USD 18.135 billion. India's reserve position with the IMF was also down to USD 4.326 billion —*PTI*

Markets up again after 5-day losing streak

Sensex close higher on value-buying after losses

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Stock markets snapped their five-day losing run on Friday with the benchmark BSE Sensex closing higher by 75 points on value-buying in banking and oil shares after recent losses.

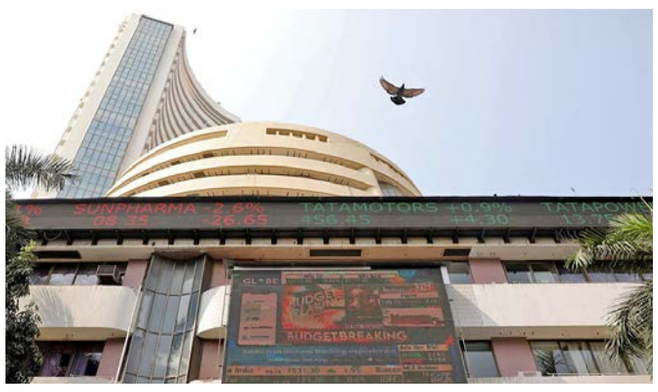
The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 75.71 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 73,961.31. During the session, it hit a high of 74,478.89 points and a low of 73,765.15 points.

Halting its five-day losing streak, the 50-share NSE Nifty rose by 42.05 or 0.19 per cent to end at 22,530.70. Nifty and Sensex tanked more than 2 per cent in the five days to Thursday amid high volatility ahead of the results of the Lok Sabha polls. "The pre-election trading strategy has come to an end, and all eyes will be on the release of the exit poll for further action. Regional diversions, marginally low voter turnout and strong resistance at current range are prompting investors to adopt a cautious stance," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services said.

From the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, HDFC Bank, Power Grid, IndusInd Bank, Larsen & Toubro, ICICI Bank were among the gainers.

Nestle India, Tata Consultancy Services Maruti Suzuki India, Infosys, Axis Bank, Hindustan Unilever were the laggards..

In Asian markets, Shanghai, Tokyo, Seoul and Hong Kong were closed on a mixed note. European stock markets were trading lower. Major indices on Wall Street ended lower on Thursday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude went lower 0.40 per cent to USD 81.53 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,050.15 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data. —*PTI*



NSE Nifty rose by 42.05 or 0.19 per cent to end at 22,530.70 **PHOTO: PTI**

- The 30-share BSE Sensex rose by 75.71 points or 0.10 per cent to settle at 73,961.31. During the session, it hit a high of 74,478.89 points and a low of 73,765.15 points

'BANKS REFORMED'

Over Rs 10L cr bad loans recovered in 10 years: FM

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said the Modi government has turned around the banking sector through various reforms and improved governance which has led to banks recovering more than Rs 10 lakh crore from bad loans between 2014 and 2023.

She said the Enforcement Directorate has investigated around 1,105 bank fraud cases, which resulted in the attachment of Rs 64,920 crore worth of proceeds of crime. As of December 2023, assets amounting to Rs 15,183 crore have been restituted to the Public Sector Banks (PSBs).

"Recently, India's banking sector achieved a significant milestone by recording its highest-ever net profit, crossing Rs 3 lakh crore. The banking sector turned around due to PM Shri @narendramodi's strong and decisive leadership. Our government atoned for the UPA's sins in the banking sector through comprehensive and long-term reforms," Sitharaman said in a post on X.

She said there has been no leniency in recovering bad loans, especially from large defaulters, under Modi government and the process is ongoing.

Sitharaman said Modi government implemented a comprehensive 4R's strategy of Recognising NPAs transparently, Resolution and Recovery, Recapitalising PSBs, and Reforms after coming to power in 2014. "Efforts to expand banking in India faltered for decades due to Congress's limited actions beyond bank nationalisation, which benefitted mainly the educated and elite. Before 2014, banking access was largely restricted to cities, she said. —*PTI*

India's banking sector achieved a significant milestone by recording its highest-ever net profit, says Nirmala Sitaraman **PHOTO: PTI**

- The Enforcement Directorate has investigated around 1,105 bank fraud cases, which resulted in the attachment of Rs 64,920 crore worth of proceeds of crime. As of December 2023, assets amounting to Rs 15,183 crore have been restituted to Public Sector Banks

'High dividend payments by RBI to govt to continue'

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

After RBI paid an unexpectedly high dividend to the central government the last financial year, it is now expected that higher dividend payments could continue in the current year too.

A report put out by SBI Research authored by Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Group Chief Economic Adviser, asserted the possible high dividend payments in 2024-25 are likely due to high US bond yields, income boost at RBI, and high foreign exchange reserves.

In 2023-24, a bumper Rs 2.11 trillion dividend was transferred by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the government. It was higher than the government's budget estimate of about Rs 1 trillion, as against Rs 87,416 crore paid in 2022-23.

RBI reported a 141 per cent rise in its net income last fiscal, paving the way for the announcement of a record dividend.

Further, the firm dividend payout is expected to help the government achieve its fiscal deficit target of 5.1 per cent of GDP in 2024-25.

The Interim Budget for 2024-25 tabled in Parliament on February 1 pegged the fiscal deficit target at 5.1 per cent.

In 2023-24, the government had pegged the fiscal deficit target for 2023-24 at 5.9 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP).

Fiscal deficit data for 2023-24 is expected to be released later today. The difference between total revenue and total expenditure of the government is termed a fiscal deficit. —*ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

FOCUSED ON COMPETITION

Adani Group profit jumps 55 pc in FY24; eyes USD 90 bn investment

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

Adani group saw a 55 per cent profit surge in the fiscal year ended March 2024 as the apples-to-airport conglomerate is back on an expansion spree and eyeing a USD 90 billion capex over the next decade.

Emerging from a damning report of a US short seller, which hit market value of its listed companies, Adani group in 2023-24 (April 2023 to March 2024) fiscal focused on containing debt, reducing founder share pledge and consolidating business in competencies.

This helped net profit surge to Rs 30,767 crore for the group's listed companies in the fiscal from Rs 19,833 crore a year ago, according to exchange data and analysts.

The 5-year CAGR (compound annual growth rate) for profit growth was 54 per cent.

EBITDA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortization) rose 40 per cent to Rs 66,244 crore despite a 6 per cent fall in the revenue.

Adani Ports and Adani Power saw a drop in net debt in FY24. Increase in leverage for Adani Enterprises and Adani Green was on the back of new capex projects undertaken by companies.

In FY24, the group's flagship Adani Enterprises commissioned an ingot wafer unit as part of solar module manufacturing, wind turbine facility and copper smelter. Adani Cement completed Sanghi Cement acquisition while promoters infused more funds.

Adani Ports acquired Gopalpur port, Adani Power commissioned 1.6 GW Godda power plant, Adani Green added 2.8GW renewable energy capacity and commenced operations of solar power project in Khavda, Gujarat, and Adani Energy Solutions put up 1,244 circuit kilometers of transmission lines. —*PTI*

Net profit surged to Rs 30,767 **PHOTO: X / @ADANIONLINE**

PHOTO: PTI

INDIA MOVES 100 MT OF GOLD FROM UK TO DOMESTIC VAULTS

MUMBAI, 31 MAY

India has moved 100 metric tonnes of its gold stored in the UK to domestic vaults in FY24, sources said on Friday.

This is one of the biggest movements of gold undertaken by the country since 1991, when pledging a substantial part of the gold holding to tide over a foreign exchange crisis resulted in its movement out of vaults.

The country's overall gold holding increased 27.46 metric tonnes in FY24 and it stands at 822 metric tonnes, as per official data.

A substantial part of the precious commodity is stored abroad, the sources said, adding that India also had its holding with the Bank of England like other countries.

The movement of 100 metric tonnes into India has taken the overall quantity stored locally to over 408 metric tonnes of gold, which means the local and foreign holding is now split almost evenly.

Of the overall gold reserves, 413.79 metric tonnes are held abroad, the annual report said.

According to the sources, given the gold buying over the last few years, a call was taken to reduce the holding abroad which is part of the standard review procedures.

In 2009, India had bought 200 tonnes of gold from the International Monetary Fund, after which it has been buying the precious commodity from the secondary market as part of its foreign exchange asset diversification efforts. —*PTI*

Domestic PV sales to exceed 5mn-mark

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Domestic passenger vehicle segment is expected to cross the 50 lakh-mark of annual sales over the next few years and Tata Motors is geared up to tap into this growth opportunity, according to Tata Group Chairman N Chandrasekaran.

In a message to the company's shareholders in Annual Report for 2023-24, he noted that the company will focus on revenue growth and strong free cash flows across its businesses going ahead.

"India is well on track to exceed the 5 million vehicle sales mark in passenger vehicles over the next few years from the 4.1 million volumes clocked last year," Chandrasekaran said.

India's vehicle penetration, at about 30 vehicles per 1,000 population, is well below global norms and is expected to continue to increase, he noted.

The EV business will focus on driving up penetration through multiple product launches, focus on market development, charging network enhancements and continuing to introduce aspirational product features, Chandrasekaran said.

The company's PV business recorded its highest-ever turnover in FY24 with an annual revenue of Rs 52,353 crore, growing by 9.4 per cent over FY23.

As the year draws to a close, the economic scenario is stabilising with global growth estimated to be around 3 per cent during the next couple of years, he said. —*PTI*

Tata Motors is geared up to tap into this growth opportunity **PHOTO: PTI**

5G adoption on a roll, yet tariff may be minimal

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India's 5G subscriber count is seen rising several notches to 20-25 per cent of the overall base in one year, but though telcos are in a "better position" to execute tariff increase, actual visibility on a "meaningful" increase remains uncertain, Ind-Ra said.

According to India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra), this is because globally too 5G has not yielded any major tariff premium over 4G rates.

The use cases of 5G in India are still limited to applications such as video streaming and multi-person video calls.

The Fitch Group company, in its telecom outlook FY25 has maintained a neutral outlook on the sector for the current fiscal. It expects the subscriber base to reach 20-25 per cent over the next one year from about 17 per cent currently, in line with global experience.

Overall, Ind-Ra expects the margin structure of telcos to improve in FY25, owing to revenue growth supported by operating leverage. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

IN VENTURE FUNDING

Indian startups raised over $3 billion

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

Funding winter in India seems to be waning as the country witnessed an improvement in venture capital funding deals, both in volume and value, in 2024.

Venture capital is typically a type of private equity financing that provides funding and support to early-stage businesses that have the potential for rapid growth.

A report by GlobalData, a data and analytics company, said that a total of 375 venture capital funding deals were announced in the first four months of 2024.

The disclosed value of these deals stood at USD 3.1 billion, the report asserted.

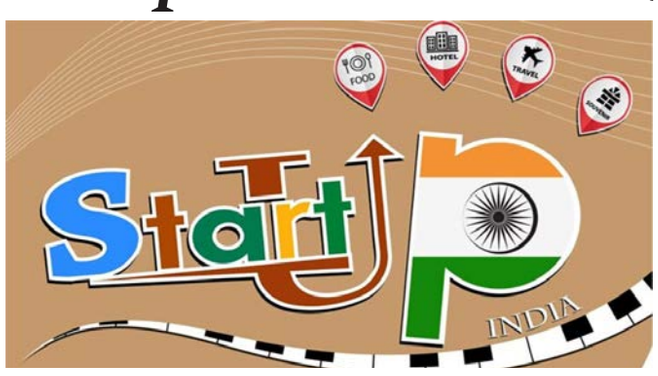
This was a year-on-year growth of 1.1 per cent and 13.8 per cent in terms of deal volume and value, respectively, according to GlobalData.

India accounted for 6.9 per cent of the total number of venture capital funding deals announced globally during January-April 2024 while its share in terms of value stood at 4.1 per cent.

As per the report from the analytics company, some of the notable funding deals in India during January-April 2024 included USD 300 million worth of funding raised by Meesho, USD 216 million in capital raised by PharmEasy, USD 103 million funding raised by Pocket FM, and USD 100 million capital secured by Shadowfax.

India apart from being a key Asia Pacific country, standing just next to China in venture capital funding activity, is also among the top five markets globally.

The data and information mentioned in the report were sourced from proprietary databases, primary and secondary research, and in-house analysis conducted by GlobalData's team. —*ANI*



A total of 375 venture capital funding deals were announced **PHOTO: PTI**

- India accounted for 6.9 per cent of the total number of venture capital funding deals announced globally during January-April 2024 while its share in terms of value stood at 4.1 per cent. This was a year-on-year growth of 1.1 per cent and 13.8 per cent in terms of deal volume and value, respectively, according to GlobalData

Power sector expects healthy growth in FY25

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

India's power sector is poised for robust growth in the fiscal year 2025, with expectations of a healthy demand surge at approximately 6.0 per cent, albeit moderating from the previous fiscal year.

The healthy demand growth continued in the first two months of FY25 at over 10 per cent supported by a favourable base. The report stands validated by the record maximum power demand of 250 GW on 30 May, as announced by the Ministry of Power.

The total power generation capacity addition improved to 25.4 GW in FY24, up from 16.9 GW in FY23, driven by enhancements in the renewable energy and thermal segments, as well as the commissioning of 1.4 GW of nuclear power capacity.

The sustainability of these achievements hinges on addressing structural inefficiencies, particularly in high-loss states such as Bihar, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Uttar Pradesh, where aggregate technical and commercial losses (AT&C) loss levels exceed 20 per cent.

Overall, the power sector's ability to navigate challenges and capitalize on growth opportunities underscores the coordinated efforts of stakeholders, including government agencies, power generation companies, and grid operators. —*ANI*

PHOTO: PTI

REAL MADRID
COACH: CARLO ANCELOTTI

ANTONIO RUDIGER (DEFENDER)	RODRYGO (FORWARD)	JUDE BELLINGHAM (MIDFIELDER)	LUKA MODRIC (MIDFIELDER)	TONI KROOS (MIDFIELDER)	VINICIUS JUNIOR (FORWARD)
Matches played: 11	Matches played: 12	Matches played: 10	Matches played: 10	Matches played: 11	Matches played: 9
Balls recovered: 42	Goals: 5	Goals: 4	Balls recovered: 10	Balls recovered: 49	Goals: 5
Passing accuracy: 92.55%	Total attempts: 38	Passing accuracy: 91.1%	Passing accuracy: 91.3%	Passing accuracy: 95.28%	Total attempts 28
Passes into attacking third: 37	Assist 2	Assist 4	Passes into attacking third: 47	Assist 8	Assist 5
Top Speed (km/h) - 34.1	Top Speed (km/h) - 33.9	Top Speed (km/h) - 32.5	Top Speed (km/h) - 31.6	Top Speed (km/h) - 29.9	Top Speed (km/h) - 34.7

LAST 5-YEAR WINNERS

2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Manchester City	Real Madrid	Chelsea	Bayern Munich	Liverpool

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

A FAIRY TALE ENDING

In the 69th season the best of the best will be crowned on the ultimate stage when the 2023/24 UEFA Champions League season concludes in London. Madrid will be eyeing their 15th UEFA Champions League title.

PLAYERS TO WATCH OUT FOR

BORUSSIA DORTMUND
COACH: EDIN TERZI

JADON SANCHO (MIDFIELDER)	MARCEL SABITZER (MIDFIELDER)	MARCO REUS (Midfielder)	NICLAS FULLKRUG (FORWARD)	MATS HUMMELS (Defender)
Matches played: 6	Matches played: 11	Matches played: 12	Matches played: 12	Matches played: 12
Penalty box: 19	Balls recovered: 24	Balls recovered: 16	Goals: 3	Balls recovered: 114
Passing accuracy: 82.84%	Passing accuracy: 81.55%	Passing accuracy: 76.42%	Total attempts: 30	Passing accuracy: 87.59%
Passes into attacking third: 10	Passes into attacking third: 18	Passes into attacking third: 10	Assist 2	Passes into attacking third: 44
Top Speed (km/h) - 33.9%	Top Speed (km/h) - 32.1	Top Speed (km/h) - 32	Top Speed (km/h) - 32.71	Top Speed (km/h) - 32

WHERE TO WATCH: SONY LIV, SONY TV

TIME: 12.30 AM (TONIGHT, 2ND JUNE)

STADIUM: WEMBLEY STADIUM

SOURCE: UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

RESEARCH: BAREERA ANJUM, SYEDA RAHILA AND ARFA TAYABA KHAN

Stage set for biggest football event

WEMBLEY, 31 MAY

Real Madrid is going for a record-extending 15th European Cup. Borussia Dortmund is aiming to pull off one of soccer's biggest upsets in recent memory.

Whoever wins the Champions League final on Saturday will be defying the odds in their own way. Madrid's domination of European club soccer's biggest prize confounds belief. Its record of 14 titles is twice as many as its closest rival AC Milan.

"The club has created its history in this competition," coach Carlo Ancelotti says. Madrid's record in the Champions League era is even more impressive: Eight wins since the tournament was rebranded in 1992; three in a row from 2016-18 and five in the last 10 years. In the same period, Madrid has won La Liga only four times.

Madrid has also been a semi-finalist in 12 of the last 14 seasons. "It's something special for the club, for all the madridistas (fans) and for us, who are also madridistas. It's a competition where we're more focused," says Ancelotti, who can win a record-extending fifth Champions League as a coach.

Teams are not supposed to enjoy such superiority in a competition filled with the biggest and richest clubs in the world. Not even great teams of recent times such as Pep Guardiola's Barcelona or Alex Ferguson's Manchester United — both repeat finalists — could come close to the kind of hold Madrid has had on the Champions League. And even in the face of competition from state-backed teams like Manchester City and Paris Saint-Germain, the all-time king of Europe refuses to be dethroned.

It is a clash between the old money and glamor of Madrid and the savvy approach of a Dortmund team that has found an alternative way to compete with Europe's superpowers.

There is no better illustration of the contrast between the rivals than Jude Bellingham, who swapped Dortmund for Madrid last year in a deal worth up to $139 million.

Coach Ancelotti said on Monday that Lunin was running a fever and was unable to practice with his teammates. Lunin stayed in the Spanish capital while Madrid's team flew to London on Friday. The club said that he would join the team on Saturday, hours before the game at Wembley Stadium.

—AP

PHOTO: PTI

Nishant Dev books Paris Olympics ticket

BANGKOK, 31 MAY

Nishant Dev (71kg) became the first Indian male pugilist to secure a Paris Games quota when he reached the semifinals of the Boxing Olympic qualifiers here on Friday.The world championships bronze medalist, who had narrowly missed on an Olympic berth in the previous qualifiers, earned the quota after defeating Vasile Cebotari of Moldova 5-0. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ankushita Boro goes down in quarterfinals

BANGKOK, 31 MAY

India's quest for booking a quota in the women's 60kg ended with Ankushita Boro's 2-3 defeat against Agnes Alexiusson of Sweden in the quarterfinals of the Boxing World Olympic Qualifiers here on Friday. The 23-year-old Boro fought hard but her Swedish opponent, a former European Games bronze medallist, dug into her reservoir of experience to pip the Indian. Boro, a former youth world champion, was slow off the blocks but managed to adapt toward the end of the first round, using straight jabs effectively. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Ministry approves Chopra's 2-month training

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Sports Ministry on Thursday approved reigning Olympic and world champion Neeraj Chopra's plan to train in Europe for 60 days along with coach Klaus Bartonietz and physio Ishaan Marwaha as preparation for the upcoming Paris Games. The ministry's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) also agreed to Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat's proposal to include strength and conditioning coach Wayne Patrick Lombard for the international training camp in Hungary from 10 to 21 June. *—PTI*

T20 WORLD CUP

India eye redemption in America

Rohit's reputation as captain will be on the line this time

NEW YORK, 31 MAY

There will be the usual favorites, the mavericks, the chokers, and also the unpredictable minnows -- the script is familiar for a World Cup but the scale would be unprecedented when the T20 showpiece, featuring a record 20 teams, spearheads cricket's audacious charge into the American market starting here on Saturday.

Defending champions England and South Africa too will be a force to reckon with, especially the latter. Given the presence of match-winners like Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, Quinton de Kock, and Kagiso Rabada, the Proteas seem primed to get rid of the chokers' tag. It will be a ground-breaking event not just because of the sheer size of the draw but also for the fact that it officially marks cricket's big-ticket entry into the USA, which will host 16 of the 55 matches to be played across 29 days.

The remaining 39 games will be held in the West Indies, including the Super 8 stage, the semifinals, and the final on 29 June. There are plots within plots that will unfold in the next month. Perhaps one of the most intriguing would be the one involving India, a team that looks so destined for an ICC trophy but has somehow managed to fall short after the 2013 Champions Trophy triumph. Rohit Sharma's reputation as captain will be on the line this time. Considering the unparalleled resources and depth that the sport's powerhouse has, most experts find it difficult to pinpoint India's trophy drought on the world stage over the past decade. *—PTI*

Indian cricket team players during a training session for the T20 World Cup in New York *PHOTO: X / @HARDIKPANDYA7*

Rohit Sharma *PHOTO: PTI*

BFI president Ajay Singh (left) with Boris van der Vorst *PHOTO: PTI*

INDIA PARTS WAYS WITH IBA, JOINS WORLD BOXING

NEW DELHI, 31 MAY

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) on Friday parted ways with the suspended IBA and joined the breakaway World Boxing in a bid to counter the threat to the sport's Olympic future.

"It is vital to the stainability of boxing that it retains its Olympics status, so we are delighted to join World Boxing," BFI president Ajay Singh said in a press release.

Singh said he looks forward to working closely with the WB Executive Board to "shape the future development of the sport and deliver a brighter future for boxers across the world." World Boxing, whose president is former IBA presidential candidate Boris, was launched in April 2023 and aims to ensure that boxing remains at the heart of the Olympic movement. *—PTI*

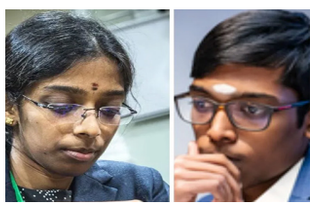
NORWAY CHESS

Vaishali out wits Cramling, Pragg loses to Nakamura

STAVANGER, 31 MAY

Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali continued her dream run to defeat veteran GM Pia Cramling of Sweden, while her brother R Praggnanandhaa went down fighting against Hikaru Nakamura of USA in the fourth round of the Norway chess tournament here. Vaishali stretched her lead to 2.5 points following her second win under classical time control.The Indian now has 8.5 points in her kitty and is followed by women's world champion Wenjun Ju of China and Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine.

With six rounds remaining in the six-player double round-robin tournament, Lei stands fourth on five points, two points clear of Humpy and Cramling. In the men's section, world number one Carlsen ground down arch-rival Fabiano Caruana of the United States on a day that witnessed all decisive games under classical time control.



R Vaishali and R Praggnanandhaa *PHOTO: PTI*

The USD 1,61,000 prize money tournament has many more critical games to come but at the end of the fourth round, Nakamura has nosed ahead on seven points, enjoying a half-point lead over Alireza.

The youngest Grandmaster ever Abhimanyu Mishra, representing the USA, Indian GM Pranav Anand, and International Master Divya Deshmukh will be among the leading contenders who will be vying for honors when the FIDE World Junior Chess Championship commences here on Saturday. *—PTI*

SINGAPORE OPEN

Treesa-Gayatri stun Korean duo

SINGAPORE, 31 MAY

Continuing their brilliant run, the Indian women's doubles pair of Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand defeated another Korean duo, world no. 6 Kim So Yeong and Kong Hee Yong, in a nail-biting quarterfinal on Friday.

The Indians, ranked no. 30 in the world, registered a superb comeback victory 18-21, 21-19, 24-22 to enter their first-ever semifinal at a BWF World Tour Super 750 event.

Treesa and Gayatri will face the winner of the second quarterfinal between Nami Matsuyama-Chiharu Shifa of Japan and Apriyani Rahayu-Siti Fadia Silva Ramadhanti of Indonesia on Saturday.

Earlier in the tournament, the young Indian pair defeated the world no. 2 Korean pair of Baek Na Ha and Lee So Hee in an intense Round of 16 match 21-9, 14-21, 21-15 that lasted close to an hour.

Treesa and Gayatri are the only Indians in the BWF Super 750 Badminton tournament.

On Thursday, ace shuttler PV Sindhu faced a defeat against former Olympic medallist Carolina Marin 21-13, 11-21, 20-22 in the women's singles second round while, in the men's singles, HS Prannoy was outclassed by Japan's Kenta Nishimoto 21-13, 14-21, 21-15 in the hard-fought encounter. *—PTI*

Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand *PHOTO: PTI*

Gauff holds firm to reach 4th round

PARIS, 31 MAY

Coco Gauff held firm against a streaky Dayana Yastremska to secure her fourth-round place in the French Open.

Third seed Gauff, runner-up at Roland Garros in 2022, won 6-2 6-4 against the Ukrainian.

Gauff had a double break lead in the second set and served for the match at 5-2 up before 30th seed Yastremska rescued a break.

American Gauff had to then save a further two break points in her next service game before pushing through to secure victory.

Gauff is bidding for a second major singles title after triumphing at last year's US Open. Qualifier Olga Danilovic also advanced after an emotional 0-6 7-5 7-6 (10-8) win over Donna Vekic.

Coco Gauff, Jannik Sinner and Matteo Arnaldi *PHOTO: X/@ROLANDGARROS*

Jannik Sinner beats Cameron Norrie's conqueror Pavel Kotov

Jannik Sinner continued his excellent start to his Roland-Garros campaign with a routine straight-sets victory over Pavel Kotov. Sinner, the world No. 2, oozed class on Court Philippe-Chatrier, playing the perfect game to nullify the big-hitting Russian, who had beaten Cameron Norrie and Stan Wawrinka en route to the third round. Sinner will play Corentin Moutet or Sebastian Ofner in the last 16.

Jannik Sinner coasted into the fourth round of the French Open with a commanding straight-sets victory over Pavel Kotov.

Sinner, the world No. 2, never seemed in trouble on Court Philippe-Chatrier, as he came through Cameron Norrie and Stan Wawrinka's big-hitting conqueror 6-4 6-4 6-4. The Italian, who arrived in Paris short of match practice following a hip injury that forced him out of the Rome Open, was dominant in his movement, and clever with his shot selection as he looked to counter the non-stop, destructive power of his Russian opponent.

Matteo Arnaldi upsets No. 6 Andrey Rublev

Italy's Matteo Arnaldi produced a sensational performance to take out No. 6 seed Andrey Rublev of Russia and reach the last 16 of the French Open on Friday.

Arnaldi, 23, saved a set point in the opening set and went on to dominate his emotionally charged opponent for a 7-6 (8), 6-2, 6-4 victory to equal his best Grand Slam run.

Rublev ranted and raged at himself as the match began to slip away, thumping his racket into his legs and kicking his courtside bench as another chance at a deep Grand Slam run came to a bitter end on the Parisian dust.

"Completely disappointed with myself the way I behaved, the way I performed, and I don't remember behaving worse [at] a Slam ever," Rublev said. *—AP*